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A GALLANT COMPANY

JOHN FORTESCUE

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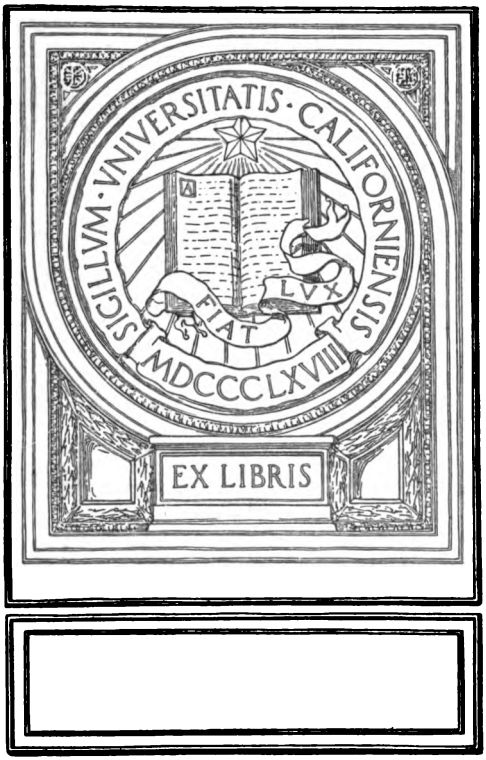

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OR

DEEDS OF DUTY & DISCIPLINE FROM THE STORY OF THE BRITISH ARMY

BY

JOHN FORTESCUE

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[I have to thank John Murray, Macmillan & Co., and the Proprietors of *Country Life* for their kind permission to reproduce, respectively, the portrait of Sir Harry Smith, the Map of St Lucia, and the portrait of Lord Raglan.]

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INTRODUCTION

TO THE YOUTH OF ENGLAND

HERE are some stories of duty and discipline from the history of the old British Army. To obey God's orders as delivered by conscience —that is duty; to obey man's orders as issued by rightful authority—that is discipline. The foundation of both alike is denial of self for a higher good. Unless the lesson of duty be first well learned, the lesson of discipline can be but imperfectly understood.

It is said that of late years there is all over Europe a loosening of the obligations of duty and discipline. This is no new report so far as concerns England. I have read of it frequently in the records of the past, and I heard it very often in my younger days. In 1896 I began to study the history of our Army in peace and in war. Again and again I was struck by the quiet steadfastness of my countrymen in times of great peril, and a thousand times I asked myself, "If we be tried as they were, shall we quit ourselves as worthily?" And in the years 1914 to 1918 my question was answered. The spirit of our

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forefathers was not dead within us. The old Army, "the Contemptibles," as we fondly call them, went forth, as for centuries our little standing Army has gone forth, to do the work of two armies, to gain the country time to prepare for war, and, in the effort, to perish. That old Army was destroyed within three months, but not before it had set such a standard of duty and discipline as stirred the emulation of all that came after it. For four years the youth of England went out to fight and to die; and the last to land in Flanders, the boys of eighteen, were the keenest of all. Never have I felt so proud of my country as during those long, weary years.

I do not, therefore, fear that we can have changed so suddenly for the worse. English boys have always been moved to the heart by tales of chivalry, devotion, and self-sacrifice; English boys grown into English men have built up the British Empire, and it is for English boys grown into English men to maintain and to preserve it. How was it built up, and how is it to be preserved? As a nation we have many and grave shortcomings; but we possess, I think, two qualities which, though themselves involving certain defects, have carried us forward to greatness. We have the gift of initiative, and we have a certain unimaginative doggedness which forbids us to know when we are beaten.

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No matter what unforeseen dangers may threaten us, we produce leaders who design methods of meeting them, and who find at once a hundred helpers ready to assist them and to strike out new lines to further their plans. And, when the leaders have thus taken the initiative, the nation seconds them with untiring patience and unwavering trust, refusing to be discouraged by failures or disheartened by reverses until it fairly forces them to win. So foreigners say of us: "The English in war always gain one battle—the last." We count upon our leaders, to use Cromwell's phrase, to make some conscience of what they do, and they in turn trust us to make some conscience of what we do. The bond of union between us is that of duty and discipline.

It was by duty and discipline that the Empire was made; it was by duty and discipline that it was maintained in the late struggle with Germany and her allies; it is by duty and discipline that it must be held together. I know that in some quarters among us the Empire is regarded with weariness. It is a common experience for a man, who has striven desperately to accomplish some great task or to reach some high station, to feel disappointment when at length he attains success. The politician who rises to be Prime Minister, the young officer who ascends to renown as general or admiral, the obscure clerk who climbs to the

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government of great provinces, the writer who sends in his first manuscript with fear and trembling and lives to see his books read all over the world—all alike feel that, though they have attained to the very height of their ambition, the result is after all insignificant. And so, now that the British Empire exists for all to see, the descendants of the men who made it cease to be proud of it, and wonder whether it be worth all the trouble and all the responsibility.

This to a man of my age is very strange. When I was a boy, the British Empire was never mentioned. Not until I was fully grown up and making my own living did it occur to anyone that there was such a thing; and then suddenly two men wrote books, pointing out that the British Empire was in being; and we all woke up, rubbed our eyes and said: "So it is." Then we became proud of it; and, if we were so then, much more have we reason to be proud of it now, with the near memory of the Canadians, Anzacs, Indians, Chinese, West Indians, and English dwellers in every one of our Colonies, who rallied round us in our great peril. But if a few grown men feel dispirited and despondent, such a thought must never enter the head of English boys who also are descendants of the men who made the Empire.

You may ask, then, why I have not taken my examples of duty and discipline from the last

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Great War. Surely, you will say, all the great deeds of old days were fully matched, if not surpassed, in the war of 1914–1918. That they were fully matched, I have no shadow of doubt; but I hope that you will have heard of them from the mouths of those who took a share in them, more truly and vividly than I can now write. Moreover, it is not always easy to arrive at the exact facts; and, though one may take the utmost pains to ascertain the truth, one may always unwittingly give pain to the living and do injustice to the dead. We are still too near to that war to see clearly and to speak out. I must leave other writers to deal with it, and I envy them their task.

Also I have other reasons for preferring to go back to old times. In these days any fine exploit in the remotest parts of the Empire may be reported in the newspapers within twenty-four hours, and only in very rare cases may be delayed for as long as a fortnight. So the whole world knows all about it immediately; and very soon afterwards the reward will be conferred and made public—a Victoria Cross, a Distinguished Service Order, a Military Cross, any one of a dozen decorations. And the hero of the incident is acknowledged as such at once; and newspapers devote articles to his performance; and he is a marked man with great prospects before him. Further, every

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humblest soldier with him is sure to receive a medal.

But in old days it was very different. News might take months to reach England, and then the only source of publicity was an official despatch printed (often with many omissions) in the official *Gazette*—a paper which probably you have never seen, and perhaps never will see, in the whole course of your lives. At best, the official account was a very bald affair, sometimes very bald indeed. In 1718, Captain Walton of the Royal Navy reported a great naval success in twenty-two words, thus: "Sir, we have taken and destroyed all the Spanish ships on the coast, the number as per margin." All commanders were not equally terse. Some, who wished to magnify their exploits, were considerably more lengthy, but, as a rule, there was little mention of details. Hence the public, knowing little, particularly of distant parts of the Empire, could only give general approval and applause to the writer of the despatch and to the very few who were mentioned therein.

Touching medals, they were for long unknown unless given by commanding officers, or occasionally by the East India Company to officers of high rank. In the Peninsular War medals were restricted to generals and to officers commanding regiments or battalions. No medal was issued to all ranks until the Waterloo medal

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of 1815, nor did the custom of issuing them to all ranks become general until 1842, and even then mainly through an accident. The Victoria Cross was only five years old when I was born, and the rest of the military decorations have all of them been instituted within my lifetime. Until 1814, the only military order was the Knighthood of the Bath, which was not easily won nor widely distributed and was never given to anyone of lower grade than an admiral or a general. There was even one general, the son of a peer, a very fine fellow and a very able man, who took great offence when he was made (as he fully deserved to be) a Knight of the Bath. He was content to do his duty without the reward of such a toy. And this was the characteristic of those great and simple times. The faithful officers and men of the old Army wrought wonders of endurance, devotion, and self-sacrifice without expectation of fame or reward, but from a sense of duty and discipline.

The examples that I have chosen are meant to illustrate duty and discipline only. I have carefully avoided spectacular incidents, famous battles, striking scenes of daring and heroism. You can read of these in plenty of other books, I know, for I received myself as a prize, when I was a boy at a private school, a book about our soldiers and the Victoria Cross. Read about them and honour them as much as you will.

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I deal with heroes of a different though not of a lesser kind. I have indeed given a short account of one very brave man who, to our shame, is quite unknown to us; but he was far more than a mere fire-eater. The sieges and campaigns here briefly narrated are familiar only to a very few military students, but should be so to every stout English boy. I find incidentally, though this was undesigned, that the narratives carry the reader to many parts of the British Empire; but this will not, I hope, render them the less interesting. English boys generally wander about the world, particularly such part of it as flies the British flag or speaks the English language. Let them never forget on their travels how the British soldier, always escorted by the British sailor, prepared the way for them, and that those British soldiers and sailors were their great-grandfathers' grandfathers.

Let them, therefore, turn a deaf ear to any that ignobly decry the soldier and the military profession, and to prophecies of universal peace. There is peace within the British Empire—in itself a very great and grand fact—but that peace has only been attained by hard fighting. It is said—and I quite believe it—that on an average one of the King's soldiers somewhere within the Empire is killed in action for every day in the year. These men die in keeping the

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peace, the *pax Brittannica*; for you may feel very well assured that peace will not keep itself. If ever universal peace be attained, it will equally be by hard fighting, and, if it be preserved, it will be, as in the British Empire, by incessant petty fighting. The watchwords for peace and for war are the same—duty and discipline.

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I

DUTY AND PHYSICAL PAIN

THERE are few things that surprise us more in reading the old campaigns of the British Army than the courage with which men withstood physical pain. It was a point of honour in particular with a self-respecting soldier to utter not a sound under the knife of the surgeon, and such a man as Sir John Moore would, even in extremest agony, control his very features so that they should show no sign of suffering. Certainly, men's powers of endurance in those days seem marvellous, and the liberties that they took with themselves almost incredible. At the storm of Cindad Rodrigo, Colonel Colborne, later Lord Seaton, was struck on the right shoulder by a musket-ball, which broke off the head of the upper bone of his arm. He was treated by the surgeons and returned to duty; but some months later he felt pain four inches lower down in the arm, and it was then found that the bullet had broken the arm in a second place and was firmly

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embedded in the bone. "The pain that he suffered in the extraction of the ball," says Sir Harry Smith, "was more than even his iron heart could bear. He used to lay his watch on the table and allow the surgeons five minutes' exertions at a time, and they were three or four days before they wrenched the ball from its ossified bed." However, Colborne was at the front and in command of his battalion within three weeks; and this, compared with men who went through less trying operations, seems a long time. At the battle of Salamanca Sir William Beresford was struck by a bullet, and the wound refused to heal, to his great distress, for he pined to be at work again. After a time he wrote a long letter to Wellington to say that the surgeons had "laid open the wound"—no doubt by a long and deep incision—on the previous day, and removed a fragment of his coat, and that he would soon be back at the front. George Napier tells us that, when he was lying wounded in a Portuguese hovel, one of his men came to see him on the evening of the action. The two conversed for some time before Napier noticed that the man had but one arm, when it appeared that the limb had been amputated, but that the man had none the less walked out to visit his officer (nine miles out and nine miles back) on the pretext of "forgetting the anguish." Perhaps the most remarkable example of all is that

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of Ensign John Shelton, who, having had an arm shattered at the storm of St Sebastian, calmly stood up outside his tent while the surgeons took it out of its socket. Anæsthetics have banished in great measure the need for such trials of fortitude; yet it cannot be doubted that, if anæsthetics had never been discovered, the officers and soldiers of the world would still make it a point of honour to endure pain in silence. Self-control is the first-born of discipline.

But we are not here dealing with points of honour, but with performance of duty; and we must now consider examples of pain manfully borne as a matter of duty. These are not difficult to find or to think of. Every wounded man who refuses to quit the field, nay, every man who, in spite of raw feet, keeps his place day after day on the march, defies pain for the sake of duty; and there are thousands of such men living all round us. In that way the new British Army falls no whit behind the old. I give but one instance. At the action of Le Cateau on the 26th of August 1914, a subaltern of artillery was left alone with one of his guns in danger. His men and half of his horses had been shot down, and he himself had one arm broken by a bullet. None the less he climbed into a driver's saddle, and with one horse in the wheel, one in the centre, and one in the lead

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galloped his gun out of action. The old Army can produce no finer example of pain conquered by sense of duty than this; and no doubt hundreds not less striking could be found during the late German war. Yet even so it is worth while to recall the French cavalry officer who, being wounded in the arm at Waterloo, went to the rear, had his arm amputated, and then returned to take command of his squadron.

There is yet another incident which is worthy of commemoration in one of our obscure wars of the past. In the years 1800 and 1801 there was much petty fighting in the extreme south of India during the pacification which followed upon the storm of Seringapatam and the death of Tippoo Sahib. The work for the most part was blind and difficult, being carried on by small columns in dense jungle against a wary and treacherous enemy, whose favourite weapon was a broad, keen blade not unlike a scythe, but without the curve and fixed vertically at the end of a long shaft. Working with a small flanking-party of sepoys through the forest, Lieutenant Parminter of the Madras Native Infantry came upon a cleared space, when he was suddenly assailed on all sides by greatly superior numbers. His sepoys, smitten with panic, took to their heels, and Parminter stood up to the enemy alone with his regimental sword. For

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a time he defended himself successfully till he tripped and fell over the stump of a tree. He was instantly pierced in five places by five blades, one of which was driven clean through his shoulder and pinned him to the earth. While he lay helpless a tribesman ran up with musket and bayonet to despatch him, whereupon Parminter by a desperate effort wrenched the blade out of the ground, and, rising to his feet with the weapon still fast in his shoulder, turned upon his opponent with his sword and despatched him. Meanwhile the sepoys had rallied, and, seeing him renew the fight, ran forward to his rescue, whereupon the whole body of the enemy, who had been hesitating in utter amazement, turned and fled in dismay. Of the subsequent career of Parminter, whether he lived or died, whether he received reward or was neglected, I have been unable to discover anything. By his name he was a Devonshire man, and that is all that I can even conjecture about him. But his brother-officers never forgot this extraordinary instance of his courage, and one of them happily recorded it in a book. What the pain must have been when he hove the blade out of the ground with the edge sawing through his flesh is not pleasant to think of. And let it not be said that he made the effort only to save his own life. He did far more than that. He brought his fugitive flanking-party forward

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again, dispersed his enemy, and so secured the safety of the main column, which was the particular duty assigned to him.

Then there are the men who conceal their wounds in order not to fail in their duty. No one knew that Picton had been shot at Quatre Bras until his corpse was examined two days later at Waterloo. There is again the classical instance of the twelve men of the Twenty-second (Cheshires) who were wounded at the battle of Hyderabad, in the Scinde campaign, but said nothing about it lest they should miss another fight. In the course of a long, hot march their strength failed them, and then the truth was discovered. Two of them had actually been shot through both legs; and yet it was long before they fell out. Perhaps the most extraordinary case of all is that of the woman, Christian Ross, who fought through many of Marlborough's campaigns as a private in the ranks of the Scots Greys. She was wounded by bullets in two different actions, but never went near a surgeon, lest her sex should be revealed, and in some way contrived to recover without awaking suspicion. At last the top of her skull was carried away by a third bullet; she was picked up for dead, and so her sex was discovered. It may be added that she was soon cured, kept a canteen at the front until the war ended, and, with the possible exception of

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Marlborough himself, was the most conspicuous character in the British camp.

But, apart from wounds, there are instances of men battling with sickness to the last extremity rather than fail in duty. We honour Marshal Villars, who, when very severely wounded at Malplaquet, called for a chair that he might continue to direct the battle; but even more remarkable, to my mind, is the figure of Marshal Saxe at Fontenoy. He was nearly dying of dropsy; he was so weak that he could not sit on a horse, but was carried about in a litter; he was so thirsty, owing to his illness, that he was reduced to sucking a bullet; the British had carried a position which he had thought impregnable; the loss of the battle seemed so certain that the members of the French royal family were warned to quit the field. Yet the helpless, gasping man in the litter kept his head, made new and excellent dispositions, and turned defeat into victory.

Parallel instances of the struggle of duty and discipline against sickness are many in our military history. The case of General Wolfe, who throughout the operations against Quebec suffered agonies from stone, will probably occur to every reader; but there is another a full century before Wolfe. In 1657 Cromwell sent six thousand men to Flanders to aid the French under Turenne against the Spaniards, and in

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1658 these took the most prominent share in the victory of Dunkirk Dunes. Their commander was a certain Colonel Lockhart, who, like Wolfe, was afflicted with the awful torture of stone. Turenne decided to fight rather suddenly, and, in fact, gave Lockhart such short notice that he apologised for it, and offered to give his reasons for his determination. "I take the reasons for granted," answered Lockhart; "it will be time to hear them when the battle is over." So at ten o'clock that night he placed himself at the head of his six thousand in a carriage, for he was quite unable to ride or walk, led them thus to the battle-field, and arriving there before the French, threw the red-coats at once into action, when they carried all before them.

Lockhart's task, however, was easier and more speedily ended than that of Wolfe, who was before Quebec for two months and a half, and, after trying various plans and losing a great number of men, accomplished within that time absolutely nothing. Anxiety and a sense of failure are trying enough in themselves, and when to these was added dreadful physical pain, it is not surprising that Wolfe almost gave way to despair. As a last desperate venture he made the movement which brought on the battle of Quebec and resolved all his difficulties. But his success was due chiefly to the fact that his

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adversary, Montcalm, lost his head and played into his hands. If he had not, Wolfe would have added only one more to his previous reverses; and, in fact, an English general of great repute told me that, after carefully examining the ground and studying the circumstances, he was of opinion that both Wolfe and Montcalm deserved to be tried by court-martial. But the fact remains that Wolfe, though in constant torture, kept control of his nerves, whereas Montcalm, who had to bear no such burden, did not; and so Wolfe fairly deserved his victory. It will be remembered that in the action Wolfe was struck by two bullets, one of them on the wrist, which must have meant acute pain, before he received his mortal wound, but continued to direct the action as if he had been untouched. It is easy to understand why his last words should have been: "Now, God be praised, I can die in peace."

But there are other examples of English commanders, who, though almost disabled by pain and sickness, nevertheless wrested success from a tangle of difficulties by sheer force of will. Being less spectacular and dramatic than that of Wolfe, they are unknown or ignored; yet they are even better worthy of commemoration.

The first is that of Brigadier-General Forbes, who in 1758 was entrusted with the duty of marching through a wild country of backwoods

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from Philadelphia in order to root out the French from their settlements two hundred and fifty miles away on the Ohio. A previous expedition, despatched on the same errand under General Braddock in 1755, had been cut to pieces; so that the method of conducting the entire enterprise required to be carefully thought out. Forbes's experience of warfare had been entirely on the classical campaigning fields of Flanders and Germany, but he grappled with the new problem, found out the solution, and trained his men to meet the new conditions. His preparations were nearly complete when he was seized by an agonising internal disease; but none the less he retained his command and led his little column into the wilderness of forest, ravine, and swamp which it was his duty to traverse. His disorder grew worse, and the pain was sometimes so excruciating as to disable him altogether for a time. But he fought against it and prevailed, for it lay with him to keep his little force in good heart. The solitude of the forest was appalling to English rustic lads, who, moreover, had been filled with tales of the terrible Red Indians that had destroyed Braddock. A very little might at any moment cause a panic. The least touch of irritability in the commander would suffice to upset men who were already half-unnerved by their surroundings. Progress was difficult and slow, yet as

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each day took the column deeper and deeper into the heart of the unknown, apprehension necessarily increased. But through three long months Forbes, despite of all his sufferings, contrived to preserve cheerfulness and confidence in his men. Then at last he met a party of French and Indians; and, through the rashness of a subordinate officer, the whole expedition very narrowly escaped disaster. The affair cost some three hundred killed, wounded, and prisoners; but Forbes amid all his anxieties and bodily anguish preserved always his sense of the ridiculous. So he made light of the reverse and let the error of the officer pass with no more than a jest at his expense. Whatever may have been his own opinions about the matter, he took care that his men should think nothing of it.

Then the elements turned against him. Heavy rain turned the rough roads, which he had made in order to carry up supplies, into seas of mud. Snow succeeded rain, and Forbes was brought to a standstill. It occurred to him that a tiny column of a few hundred men might yet succeed in reaching the French settlement, which was his object, and might be strong enough to master it. So, though now sick unto death, he chose out twenty-five hundred picked men, and with them he set out, leaving all tents and baggage behind, and himself travelling in

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a litter at their head. What misery and discomfort this must have meant to a man too weak even to walk, it is not easy to imagine; but Forbes was taking a great risk, and would let no man bear the responsibility for him. For seven days they floundered on through the forest amid the cold and wet of late November, and on the seventh day they heard a great explosion. Advancing on the morrow they came at last to the French settlement. The fortifications had been blown up; the barracks and store-houses were in ashes; the French had retreated sixty miles to northward, leaving only a few huts standing; and Forbes's work was done. He built a stockade round the huts, installed a small garrison in them, and christened them by the name—now that of a mighty city which has replaced the huts—of Pittsburgh, in honour of the great Minister, William Pitt.

It remained for him to bury the bones of the men who had perished at the defeat of Braddock. Having fulfilled this pious duty, Forbes at the beginning of December set out on his return journey. By great care and enormous difficulty he was brought back alive to Philadelphia. There his first thought was for his officers, for whom he caused a medal to be struck in commemoration of his march, authorising them to wear it round their necks on a blue ribbon. He lingered on at Philadelphia until March 1759,

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when death at last gave him rest. Though he had fought no brilliant action, he had successfully carried out an operation of enormous military importance, in the face of every kind of difficulty, hardship, and danger, and that while contending unceasingly against extremity of bodily torture.

The next example of will triumphing over bodily infirmity is of rather a singular kind. In January 1759 a naval squadron and a small military force were sent out to capture the French islands of the windward group in the West Indies, notably Martinique and Guadeloupe. The troops were under the command of a feeble old man who looked at the masses of mountain and forest in despair. He fumbled nervously at Guadeloupe, keeping his men in unhealthy situations and accomplishing nothing until more than two thousand out of six thousand of them were dead or on the sick-list. Indeed, the force was actually on the brink of destruction when, fortunately, he died. The command then devolved upon General Barrington, who was so utterly crippled with gout that he could hardly move; but, no sooner had he assumed it than the British warships were ordered off to look after a French squadron which was on its way to the West Indies. So many sailors had died that the Commodore, with the immediate prospect of an action before him, begged Barrington to

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spare him some soldiers to supplement his crews. Barrington loyally gave him three hundred men; the Commodore sailed away; and Barrington was left alone without a single armed vessel, with several ship-loads of rapidly perishing troops, with one untenable position, which the French were already preparing to besiege, on Guadeloupe itself, and, for his own particular comfort, with the racking torture of gout.

What was he to do? It was difficult to say, for a single French man-of-war, if one chanced to slip past the English squadron, would make havoc of his unfortunate force. But he made up his mind at least to do something, if only to save the lives of his men; for soldiers—and for that matter any other bodies of men—if they are kept idle with nothing to think of except sickness and death, will assuredly continue with increasing rapidity to sicken and die. Half of his force was dead or in hospital already; and he was determined not to lose the other half. His predecessor had been afraid to attack Guadeloupe. The Navy had taken for him the one place which he held; but at every other spot where he had contemplated a landing there were batteries bristling with guns, and he had feared to engage them. But Barrington argued differently. If, he reasoned, the French are defending every assailable point, they must have dispersed their force; or, in other words, they are holding many

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positions with weakness and none in strength. If I have not men-of-war, I have at least transport-ships, and in them I can carry a force superior to that in any isolated French battery, land them somehow at some convenient point and take these batteries, one after another, in flank or rear. In this way I shall devour the defenders of Guadeloupe piece-meal until none are left; and then the island will be mine, and I can establish myself in the French fortifications and defy all enemies. Having been carried into a boat (for he could not walk) he reconnoitred the batteries and the shore from the sea, and came to the conclusion that his reasoning was sound.

His mind once made up, Barrington fell to work at once, and with complete success. The troops recovered their spirits, and therewith their health, immediately upon the prospect of a little fighting; and with each little action they became more ardent and more daring, until at length nothing could stop them. It is a good deal to ask of soldiers to fight and march in the tropics with little respite for forty-eight hours, but Barrington's men cheerfully did it, and with an occasional day's rest were ready to do it again and again. The conquest of Guadeloupe was necessarily slow from the nature of the case, but in six weeks it was accomplished, and on the 1st of May the capitulation was signed.

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The ink of the signatures was scarcely dry when news came that powerful French reinforcements had reached Martinique, no more than twelve hours' sail distant. Had they arrived one day earlier, or had Barrington's final victory come one day later, these reinforcements would have saved Guadeloupe. As it was, the island was safely in Barrington's hands and remained there; for the commander of the French expedition, finding that he was come too late, re-embarked his troops at Martinique and sailed sadly away.

The whole of the actual operations were carried out by two excellent officers, Colonels Clavering and Crump, for Barrington himself was unable to move. But, as both of them cordially acknowledged, the entire scheme was Barrington's own. Barrington's was the brain that conceived and the spirit that made alive; but he personally was condemned to remain stationary and inactive, and to wait wearily for news of success or failure. His days and nights must have been very long as he lay in the sultry heat tormented by mosquitoes and fighting against pain, longing that he could be with his soldiers, wondering what might be the meaning of the shots which he heard in the distance and reflecting that, whatever might happen to Crump and Clavering, he and he alone must take responsibility for any miscarriage. But he

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endured the trial in patience and he had his reward.

Unfortunately there have been officers who lacked the strength to triumph over disease and anguish, as did Forbes and Barrington, but have none the less felt themselves impelled by a sense of duty, which can only be called mistaken, to attempt tasks for which they were utterly unfitted. One such man was General Elphinstone, who held the command at Kabul during the disastrous occurrences in Afghanistan during the winter of 1841–1842. His health was already hopelessly broken when the appointment was offered to him in the year 1840, and he had made up his mind to go home on sick-leave knowing that he was unfit for further work. But the post was pressed upon him by the Governor-General; and Elphinstone gave way, though very unwillingly, because as a soldier he considered it his business to obey orders. Had his health been good, he would have been the right man for the place, for he knew his business thoroughly as an officer, and was well liked as an amiable and courteous gentleman. But the situation at Kabul demanded at the moment a soldier of exceptional vigour of body and strength of will. The Governor-General, with extreme unwisdom, had placed all control in the hands of civilians, who had not only grievously mismanaged the political affairs,

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which rightfully lay within their province, but by ignorant and perverse mishandling had utterly demoralised the military force. They persisted that all was right, and neither they nor the Governor-General would listen to the soldiers who represented, with clearer insight, that all was wrong. The result was that the troops were despondent, and, feeling that they were commanded by civilians and not by soldiers, had lost confidence in themselves. Elphinstone was too much broken down to raise their spirit. He could hardly sit on a horse for one thing, which was sufficient to prove his physical weakness; and, though he had sufficient control of himself to be always gentle and courteous, no matter how acute his sufferings, he had lost all power of will and resolution, was incapable of giving orders, or, if he gave them, would countermand them at the shortest notice. Yet, from honest unwillingness to throw upon others the responsibilities—and they were terrible and cruel responsibilities—which lay upon himself, he refused to relinquish the command to any subordinate. To this cause principally are to be attributed the disasters and disgraces which overtook the force at Kabul itself and during the retreat through the Khyber Pass.

Yet Elphinstone had men under him, men of singular fortitude and devotion, could they but

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have commanded instead of him. He had among his five thousand troops only one single officer of engineers, one Captain Sturt. In the first outbreak of insurrection in Kabul, Sturt had the misfortune to be caught by the insurgents unarmed and was only with difficulty rescued from the Afghan knives. He was brought into his quarters with two deep stabs in the side and shoulder and a third in the face. His mouth would not open, his tongue was swollen and paralysed, and the nerves of his throat were so affected that he could neither swallow nor articulate. Though faint and exhausted by loss of blood and pain he could not lie down, lest he should be choked by the blood running down his throat; and though, of course, raging with thirst he was unable to quench it. For twelve hours he was incapable of swallowing anything, and for some hours afterwards only a drop of water at a time with very great suffering.

This happened on the 2nd of November 1841; and for the next few days all was confusion, owing to the weakness and vacillation of Elphinstone. Sturt on his sick-bed was fretted to death, and on the 4th he drew up, in his capacity as engineer, a plan for the defence of the cantonments in which the troops were stationed. In the evening an officer arrived late to ask his advice as to the means of capturing a fort just outside them, and Sturt, who had just been made comfortable for

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the night, gave his opinion in every detail. The operation was attempted on the 5th but miscarried, owing to the neglect of his recommendations; and Sturt, losing all patience, decided to return to duty next day. He could not put on any clothes, so at six o'clock next morning he turned out in a shirt and pyjamas and for four hours actively superintended the throwing up of earthworks and the posting of guns; nor did he again return to the sick-list. Of course, only a man of remarkable physical strength could have done such things; for the will alone cannot enable a man who has been in bed for a fortnight with high fever to walk across his room. But having such store of physical force, Sturt had the will to draw upon it to the utmost.

Another member of the garrison, next in command to Elphinstone, was Colonel John Shelton, the man who as a young subaltern had stood up unmoved at San Sebastian while the surgeons took his arm out of its socket. Whether his nerves were jangled by the operation or whether he was by nature perverse, Shelton had grown up into an odious and cantankerous man. He quarrelled with everyone, and ruled his regiment as a martinet, enforcing discipline vexatiously and without sense of proportion. Still the men trusted him in the field, for he had studied his profession and knew it thoroughly. In Kabul he gave, if consulted, opinions which were almost

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invariably sound and correct; but he turned sulky when they were rejected, as they invariably were, by the irresolute and distracted Elphinstone. The final retreat from Kabul was supposed to be conducted as a peaceful and voluntary operation under treaty with the Afghans, who, as a matter of fact, began attacking the retiring troops before they had even started from the city. The column, which nominally numbered five thousand fighting men, moved as a disorderly mob, encumbered by four times their number of miserable followers. The snow lay deep; the frost was bitter; and the sepoys, who composed the greatest part of the force, were so utterly numbed with cold that they could not have used their arms even if they had had the heart, which they had not, to do so. The only troops that retained some spirit and discipline were the English, of whom there were only a few gunners and a single weak battalion, Shelton's, the Forty-fourth.

For two days Elphinstone struggled on helplessly, still trusting to promises of help and protection from the treacherous Afghans; but on the third day he refused longer to be cajoled, and the retreat began to assume a military form. The fighting men were by this time reduced to about three hundred, weakened by hunger and cold, threading their weary way over steep passes and through dangerous defiles amid

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thousands of savage, bloodthirsty tribesmen. The advanced guard, though a mere handful of men, fought their way forward and halted; and the Afghans, always preferring an enemy's back to his face, threw all their strength upon the rear-guard. But here Shelton was in command, and Shelton would not be beaten. He likewise had but a handful of soldiers; their ammunition was scanty, and the odds against them were terrific; but Shelton flew from group to group of his men, wherever the danger was greatest, and inspired them with strength and courage. The last stage of the march lay through a gorge three miles long, the sides of which were lined from end to end with Afghan marksmen; but Shelton carried his men through it by sheer moral force, and at four o'clock in the afternoon brought his rear-guard, sadly thinned but triumphant, to its camping ground.

The troops had been on foot since daybreak and had nothing to eat; but a dangerous pass lay ahead and Shelton urged that the retreat should be continued without delay. At seven o'clock on that same evening, therefore, the march was resumed, the main body of the Forty-fourth leading the way, a mob of three thousand followers coming next, and Shelton, as before, in charge of the rear-guard. Twelve thousand soldiers and followers had perished in three days, so that the column was less en-

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cumbered than it had been. For seven miles it was unmolested; then a few shots were fired which caused a panic among the followers and caused some delay, but it was not until daylight came that the Afghans gave real trouble. Then for ten miles the conflict with them became incessant. At three o'clock in the afternoon the advanced party, having forced its passage into clear ground, halted, and turned about, cheering loudly while Shelton with indomitable energy fought his way forward, foot by foot, through the hordes of his pursuers, and once again brought in his rear-guard triumphant.

There were now only two hundred men left, all alike exhausted by fatigue, hunger, and thirst, and there were still thirty miles to be traversed before they could reach a safe refuge. Shelton was their one hope; but Elphinstone had again renewed negotiations with the Afghans, who were shrewd enough to require that Shelton should be given to them, together with Elphinstone himself, as a hostage. There is no need to pursue the dismal story further. Shelton became a prisoner, by the orders of his superior officer, and only one man of the two hundred escaped. But it is very evident that, if Shelton had been in command of the retreating force from the first, he would have brought at least a part of it safely through the trial. Elphinstone in three days had carried it over a distance of

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only sixteen miles; whereas, under the fiery impulse of Shelton, the men, though fighting incessantly, had traversed thirty miles in less than thirty-six hours. Never at a time of desperate peril did soldier do his duty more nobly than that cantankerous, one-armed Colonel.

His temper was not improved by being haled off as a prisoner when he longed only to stay with his men and save them or die with them. His demeanour to his fellow-captives was insufferable, and when he was at last released he found, on his return to India, that he was to be tried by court-martial and made the scapegoat for all the disasters which he had tried to avert. The trial was most irregularly conducted, the charges against him being many of them quite pointless and the evidence admitted against him quite worthless; but he was honourably acquitted, and he remained in command of the Forty-fourth. One day in a barrack-yard in Dublin his horse took fright. Shelton with his single arm was unable to control the animal, and he was violently thrown and killed by the fall. The story goes that his battalion thereupon turned out and gave three cheers; and it may be true, for his temper had become fiendish. Yet nothing can dim the lustre of his behaviour during those thirty-six hours in the defile of the Khyber. He took over a mere handful of men, weary, hungry, frost-bitten and

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in the lowest depths of despair. Thousands of soldiers and followers had perished in the retreat, and the remnant, never doubting that they must share their fate, were listless, spiritless, and hopeless. Then Shelton assumed command of them; discipline revived at once; and they became not only soldiers but heroes. If Elphinstone had not surrendered him to the Afghans, Shelton might possibly have carried a small remnant through all dangers, and his name would have been honoured in England to this day. Had the Victoria Cross existed in his time he would have entitled himself to it fifty times; and it could hardly have been denied to him, for it was he who redeemed the character of the British soldier in that march of disgrace. But he is forgotten, or, if he be remembered, it is as the Colonel whose battalion cheered the news of his death. Still if ever British soldier was a hero, it was John Shelton.

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II

FOUR SIEGES

PERHAPS there is no operation which tries the discipline and endurance of soldiers so severely as to be pent up within a fortress and besieged. Much, of course, depends upon the nature of the fortress and of the siege. If the place be small and weak, the defence cannot last for very long. If the besiegers be a savage and uncivilised enemy who will massacre or enslave or otherwise maltreat their enemy, then the garrison may as well fight it out to the very last man, since death, or worse than death, is certain in any case. If the fortress be strong and if it be possible to harass and discomfit the besiegers by sorties, then the life of beleaguered troops may be sometimes lively and exciting. But if it be so formidable that the besiegers will not venture to attack or to bombard, and they simply sit down before it in order to starve the defenders out, then a siege, or a blockade if you prefer so to call it, becomes a very deadly thing. In all cases there is monotony and the weariness that comes of it, and the besieged begin to ask

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themselves, How long will this last? Will our friends ever come to relieve us? Have they started to relieve us and been defeated on the way? Can relief reach us before we are starved out? Can we go on for much longer upon the same food, and not much of it, which we have eaten until we are sick of it? Shall we have the bodily strength to repel an assault, if the enemy delivers it in great force? Is the enemy plotting some infernal device for blowing our defences, and perhaps ourselves, into the air? Is it worth while to continue resistance when it seems certain that we must surrender in the end? Then it is that all depends upon the man who is in command, whether he not only has a firm will and a stout heart himself, but can create stout hearts in others, and can inspire all with determination to do their duty.

I. The Siege of Alicante

Such a leader was found at Alicante in March of the year 1709, when the great Duke of Marlborough was preparing for the campaign of Malplaquet. You have never heard, it is very likely, of the siege of Alicante, but you remember that the war which took Marlborough to Flanders was called the War of the Spanish Succession, so that it was reasonable that one of the scenes of action should be Spain. Alicante,

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then, a castle-fortress built on a huge hill of bare and solid rock, was occupied in October 1708 by eight hundred British and Huguenot soldiers under General John Richards, when a hostile army under General d'Asfeld came up and compassed it about. So strong were the fortifications that it was hopeless to think of assaulting them; while it was impossible to throw up trenches in the solid rock, and to batter a breach in the defences in the orthodox way. The only expedient was to hew mines under them and blow them up, which d'Asfeld, who was at least a persevering man, duly proceeded to do.

For three long months his men toiled and toiled to drive their gallery into the rock under the castle, until at length d'Asfeld's engineers considered that it had been carried far enough. D'Asfeld then filled it with seventy-five tons of gunpowder—an enormous charge in those days—and before springing the mine summoned Richards to surrender the castle. He added that, if Richards had any doubts as to the propriety of surrendering, he might send down two of his own officers to examine the mine for themselves, when they would see that the prolongation of resistance would be madness. This was civil and chivalrous; and Richards sent down two officers accordingly. They looked into everything carefully—and you may be sure that d'Asfeld's engineers did their best

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to frighten them—and after thinking the matter over they returned to Richards with their report. They agreed that the explosion of the mine would be destructive, but they did not think that it would be fatal to further defence of the castle. Richards, therefore, sent a polite message to d'Asfeld that he declined to surrender. D'Asfeld, unwilling to accept the answer, repeated the summons a second time, and received the same reply. Still, apparently, incredulous, or with some hope of scaring Richards, he solemnly repeated the summons a third time. Richards resolutely reiterated his defiance; and d'Asfeld then warned him that at six o'clock on the morning of Sunday the 3rd of March the mine would be fired. Possibly he hoped that the selection of Sunday for blowing Richards and his garrison into the next world would convince Richards that he was in earnest.

Immediately above the gallery were two guards, each of thirty men, which could not be withdrawn without peril to the safety of the castle; and Richards, who could not but realise that d'Asfeld was almost morbidly anxious to master the fortress, would take no risks. A little before the appointed hour of that Sunday morning he and all the senior officers of the garrison who were off duty walked quietly down and joined the sixty men of the guard. They

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were come to stand by their men in the hour of trial. Just before six o'clock a thin column of blue smoke came curling up the Rock, and a corporal of the guard reported that the slow match had been fired. There were yet a few minutes to await, for d'Asfeld's engineers would need time to run to a distance at which they would be safe from the explosion. Richards, his officers, and men remained immovable; the guards stood under arms and the sentries stuck to their posts. Presently the whole Rock trembled and shook. The ground beneath their feet was riven into vast clefts which yawned for a moment with a hideous hollow roar and instantly closed again. There was hoarse rumbling and a reek of sulphurous smoke, and then all was still, and the soldiers of the guard could rise to their feet and look about them. Eighteen of them were left; and the rest were gone, for Richards, eleven officers, and forty-two men had been swallowed up quick like the company of Korah. Yet the defences were not seriously damaged, and the garrison quietly resumed its daily duties. For six weeks it continued unconquered and defiant, until Admiral Byng arrived with his squadron, bringing orders that the garrison was to be withdrawn and that Alicante was to be evacuated. So to Minorca they sailed; and Richards and his companions were left sleeping soundly in their sepulchre of

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stone. There they rest to this day, having done their duty; and their monument is the grandest in the world, an imperishable rock, the rock of Alicante.

II. The First Siege of Minorca

How few of us remember that Minorca was once a British possession, an outpost in the Mediterranean, acquired in 1708 through the foresight of Marlborough, lost in 1756, regained at the close of the Seven Years' War, lost again for good in 1782, reconquered in 1798, and finally resigned in 1801, when we had found a more suitable station in Malta. I have been told that there are only two signs of our occupation to be found in the island now. The first is a road made by an English Governor, Kane; the second is that the Spanish children still play marbles and still cry "Knuckle down" as they were taught by the sons of the British soldiers. In England itself the original conquest is commemorated by the second title of Lord Stanhope, who is descended from the first English conqueror. The actual title is Lord Mahon, Mahon being the name of the capital of Minorca; and as it is a corruption of the Latin *Portus Magonis*—Mago's Harbour—and as Mago was the Carthaginian of whom we have all read in our Roman history, we are faced with the

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strange fact that an English peer bears an ancient Carthaginian name, only less familiar to us than that of Hannibal.

Yet Minorca should not be forgotten, if only because of the two sieges which it underwent while in our possession. The first, that of 1756, was conducted by sixteen thousand French troops, whereas the English garrison, thanks to the neglect of the English Government, did not number three thousand. Their commander was General Blakeney, a veteran who had served under Marlborough and was now past eighty years of age; but he had so few officers with him that he was obliged to look to everything himself. He retired into the principal defence of Port Mahon—Fort St Philip, a very strong place—and offered a most spirited resistance, counting that relief would certainly come, and inspiring his men to do their utmost. At the end of a month relief did come in the shape of a fleet under Admiral Byng; but it was a fleet inadequately manned. Byng had tried to borrow a battalion from Gibraltar to do work on board ship, but General Fowke, who was in command there, would not spare it, for his garrison, too, was weak, and he did not know whether Gibraltar also might not be attacked. So poor Byng sailed to Minorca, failed to drive away the French fleet which covered it, and went away again.

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Still old Blakeney was not disheartened in the least, and would not hear of any discouragement among his soldiers. The French were reinforced by four thousand additional men, but Blakeney stood up to them undismayed. Had he had a thousand more troops the French would never have taken Minorca. But the odds against him were too great. His garrison was slowly worn away. Every casualty threw additional work on the survivors, increasing fatigue and diminishing the power of resistance to sickness. At last the French made a great assault upon several points simultaneously. They were met by a most stubborn defence and in many places repelled with heavy loss, but they succeeded in mastering some important outworks; and the garrison suffered heavily. At the close of the day Blakeney had hardly men enough left to man his guns, while his two best officers had both of them been laid low by wounds. On the morrow, therefore, he surrendered, marching out with drums beating and colours flying—with the honours of war, as it was called—and he and his brave men were allowed to join their comrades at Gibraltar. The French were thankful to get hold of Minorca upon any terms. The siege had lasted for seventy days, during which old Blakeney had not once changed his clothes nor really gone to bed. If ever man did his duty to the last, it was that noble veteran of

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eighty. Small wonder that with such an example before them his men worked for him to the utmost of their strength.

Still the fact remained that Minorca was lost; and the English nation, furious with rage, cast about for a scapegoat to bear the blame. First they turned savagely upon Blakeney, but, on finding out the truth, rightly exalted him as a hero. However, there remained General Fowke, who had had the courage to do what was right for the safety of Gibraltar, and Admiral Byng, who had at least tried to do his duty; so Fowke was dismissed the service and Byng was shot. But it is not by persecuting or shooting innocent men that fortresses can be held; and Minorca was to be lost a second time for precisely the same reasons as in 1756.

III. The Second Siege of Minorca

In the year 1779 when we were much harassed by the rebellion of the American Colonies, and both France and Spain had taken advantage of our embarrassment to declare war upon us, the Spaniards bethought themselves that they would recapture both of the Mediterranean ports which we had taken from them—Gibraltar and Minorca. They began what is called the siege of Gibraltar in June 1779; I shall have more to say about that siege presently, but just now it

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is only necessary to mention that in November 1779 the Governor of Gibraltar thought it his duty to detain there a battalion which had been intended to reinforce the garrison of Minorca. Thus history repeated itself, for General Eliott was obliged to do in 1779 exactly what General Fowke had done in 1756; in both cases owing to the neglect of the Government at home.

Minorca at that moment was in a very sad state. Fort St Philip, upon which the safety of Port Mahon and the island rested and which Blakeney had so gallantly defended, was, as has been said, immensely strong; but it was also very unhealthy. Apart from the ordinary structures of masonry, which are common to all fortifications of that period, Fort St Philip had galleries and batteries hewn out of the solid rock, which gave unusual protection to the defenders. But these excavated chambers were low, and, when the summer sun beat full upon them, were stiflingly close and hot. Malarial fever was also prevalent, which made the men weak, even if it did not kill them. At the beginning of 1779 the Governor described two of his English battalions as looking more like ghosts than soldiers, and he added that he could not muster fourteen hundred men who were fit to stand a siege. And this Governor was no croaker. He was General James Murray, who had commanded a brigade under General

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Wolfe at Quebec, and, being left in charge of Quebec after its capture, had defended it most gallantly against a greatly superior force of French. His garrison there had been weak and sickly. He described them himself as "half-starved, scorbutic skeletons"; but none the less he had managed to hold his own; so that plainly he was a man not easily discouraged.

For two years he was kept in suspense at Minorca, knowing certainly that he would be attacked sooner or later; and at last, in August 1781, eight thousand Spaniards landed in Minorca and closed in around Fort St Philip. The Spanish commander began by offering Murray money to surrender the fortress, a proceeding which not only called forth from Murray an indignant refusal but strengthened in him his resolution to defend himself to the last. Eight thousand French joined the eight thousand Spaniards, and the siege was begun in earnest. Murray had two English battalions, the Fifty-first and Sixty-first (1st Yorkshire Light Infantry and 2nd Gloucesters) and two German battalions from the King's Hanoverian army, all good soldiers, though there were many worn-out old men among the English. It may be reckoned that he had about two thousand effective men, which was none too many; but he had thought out all his plans and was ready and confident. The guns of Fort St Philip

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made the harbour secure for the entry of friendly vessels; and, though the besiegers threw up battery after battery to bar the ingress to the port, they could never close it to small vessels creeping in at night. Thus supplies and, above all things, fresh vegetables could be obtained; and so long as this state of things lasted Murray felt perfectly happy. Meanwhile he varied a steady and effective cannonade of the enemy by daring and vigorous sallies; and in fact, after three months of hard work, heavy losses, and no progress made, the Spaniards and French gave up the siege as a bad job and turned it into a blockade.

Murray maintained a lively resistance until the end of the year 1781, and then came the one thing that he dreaded. The supply of vegetables failed; the Government having relied for this vital matter upon Italian agents who did not fulfil their contract. Half of the garrison had already lived upon salt provisions for three years, and the two English battalions for six years. There was no means of growing vegetables in the fortress itself; and scurvy made its appearance at once. Murray had seen more than enough of scurvy at Quebec; but at Fort St Philip its virulence was intensified by the foul air of the subterranean casemates. The men began to fall down fast, but such was their spirit and discipline that they never complained.

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They even concealed their ailments rather than go into hospital and throw more work upon their comrades. Day after day they fell in for duty, ghastly shadows of men, tottered round to their posts, waited patiently until relieved, and tottered back until their turn should come again. Some, too feeble even to totter, were carried to their posts, while there were men strong enough to carry them, and ended their duty there. Often a sergeant, calling the muster-roll of the relief, received no answer, and going to rouse the silent man found that he was dead. Week after week for two long months these patient devoted soldiers stuck to their work. Their bodies grew steadily weaker; their ranks shrank steadily thinner; but while they could stand they obeyed orders. On the 1st of February the roll showed no more than seven hundred and sixty men fit for duty, whereas the daily guards required four hundred and fifteen. Thus there were not men enough to relieve the guards even on alternate days. Still Murray held out. On the 2nd and 3rd one hundred men were carried to hospital, and on the 5th Murray capitulated. The besiegers were drawn up, as usual, to see the garrison march out, and even the most hardened old French and Spanish soldiers could not conceal their compassion. Six hundred decrepit figures, with their red coats hanging loose about their

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wasted bodies, crawled slowly out and dropped the arms which they had hardly strength to carry. They were vanquished; they were prisoners; but they were soldiers who had done their duty; and the French and Spanish officers, led by the Spanish Commander-in-Chief, vied with each other in doing them honour, and in lavishing on them the comforts which should restore them to health. If Minorca were lost, it was not through the fault of Murray and his men. They are forgotten, and Minorca is forgotten. We none of us are fond of recollecting our failures. The Gloucesters and the Yorkshire Light Infantry have covered themselves with glory on many fields since 1782; yet they have never surpassed, in all their history, their six months of silent endurance in the stifling casemates of Fort St Philip.

IV. Gibraltar

One great reason why Minorca was lost in 1782 was that Gibraltar was held. We had so many enemies upon our hands that we could not rightly look after both; and this was recognised by General Eliott when he kept at Gibraltar a reinforcement which had been intended for Minorca. But who was General Eliott? He was, like Murray, a Scot, and a man of singularly varied accomplishments, even

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for a Scot. He had been educated partly in Holland, partly in France, partly in Prussia. He had joined the British infantry at the age of seventeen, and before he was twenty-three had become first an engineer, then an artilleryman, and then an officer of heavy cavalry. Finally, at the age of forty-four, he had raised and commanded the first regiment of light dragoons ever formed for the British Army (it is now the 15th Hussars), and commanded it with the highest distinction in Germany during the Seven Years' War. At forty-six he was a Lieutenant-General, with a long roll of campaigns attached to his name—Dettingen, Fontenoy, Emsdorff, Warburg, Havana; and at sixty, in the year 1777, he was sent Governor to Gibraltar.

There he found everything in disorder—fortifications fallen to pieces, no guns mounted, insufficient supply of provisions, and too weak a garrison. The natural strength of the place was of course great, for it is a precipitous rock, three miles long, surrounded on three sides by the sea, and connected with Spain only by a flat isthmus, half a mile in breadth. But we had taken it from the Spaniards in 1704, so that it was not in itself impregnable. Eliott set to work at once to repair the defences and to think out his plans for resistance against a formidable attack, and he had accomplished

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much when, on the 21st of June 1779, all communication with the mainland ceased. A month later the place was blockaded by sea by a large Spanish naval force; and Gibraltar was cut off from the world. Eliott had begged for eight thousand men; but the Government at home would spare him no more than five thousand. He had entreated for the despatch of a store of victuals; but so deficient were his supplies that on the very first day of the siege he was obliged to reduce the allowance of food to his men by one half. This was a bad beginning for a commander who might, for all he knew, be beleaguered for months, and yet must somehow keep his men contented and in good heart. Officers in those days had power, if they chose, to flog soldiers almost to death; but something more than the lash is necessary to obtain cheerful service from men in cheerless surroundings. Eliott could be severe enough when a soldier really deserved punishment; but he had his own methods of discipline, and he knew the value of example.

Thus, when he put his garrison upon short allowance, he put himself upon short allowance first of all. Forage was so scarce that he was obliged to order a certain number of horses to be destroyed; and he shot one of his own to begin with. He was by long habit a very abstemious man, living chiefly on vegetables, simple puddings, and water; and he now tried

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by experiment on himself what might be the smallest quantity of rice on which a man could live for twenty-four hours. He actually subsisted himself for eight days on four ounces (about half a teacupful) of rice a day. When the commander-in-chief cut down his meals to so low a figure it was hard for the private to complain. Of course, however, there were grumblers, and before the siege had lasted four months a soldier of the Fifty-eighth was heard to say that, if the Spaniards came, he would be hanged if he wouldn't join them. The offender was, of course, brought up before the General. "The man must be mad," said Eliott, "let him be bled, blistered, and put into a strait waistcoat; let his head be shaved; let him be made over to the Provost-Marshal for confinement on bread and water, and let him be prayed for in church." So for some Sundays the man appeared, a miserable object, in the garrison church for his comrades to laugh at; whereas, if he had been flogged, they would have sympathised with him and pitied him.

Throughout the whole of 1779 no relief arrived at Gibraltar, and it was necessary to reduce the rations still further, while the civil inhabitants were obliged to live on thistles, dandelions, and leeks. However, in the third week of January 1780, Admiral Rodney's fleet came in bringing a reinforcement of one battalion

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(the Twenty-third Royal Welch, which was meant to go to Minorca), and an abundant supply of provisions. These lasted until September, and then supplies again ran short. Rations were reduced, and in lieu of salt beef or pork, salt fish was served out, of which everyone soon became heartily sick. There was room for vegetable gardens at Gibraltar, and Eliott, always far-seeing, had taken care for their cultivation. But in spite of all precautions scurvy broke out in October, though it was fortunately kept more or less within bounds by the chance arrival of a Danish ship, laden with oranges and lemons, which were promptly bought up by Eliott for the hospital. Not until the following April, 1781, did another English fleet arrive with a convoy of provisions and once again make the garrison safe from starvation.

The siege had by this time lasted for a year and nine months; and now the Spaniards, having got over a hundred guns into position, began a bombardment of the town and fortress which never ceased for twenty-four consecutive hours until the following May, 1782—a period of thirteen months. Hitherto they had not by any means been idle with their guns, and the English batteries had always been manned, night and day; but now there was no peace. Much damage was done to the fortifications, though the losses of the troops were comparatively

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small; and the town was absolutely destroyed. The inhabitants fled; and then there were discovered large stores of provisions and wine which the merchants had been hoarding up to sell at famine prices. The sight was too much for some of the troops. For nearly two years they had been overworked, always monotonously and often insufficiently fed, and for six weeks under continuous heavy fire; and they could not resist the temptation to enjoy themselves. Though shells were dropping about them in all directions, they fell ravenously upon the good things; and it was not until he had hanged three men that Eliott could restore order. Then the garrison settled down again to be fired at and to return the fire; and there was no incident to vary the daily round until November, when Eliott made a sally with half of his garrison and destroyed the whole of the enemy's advanced works. This put new heart into the defenders, after the weary experience of two and a half years of siege.

The year 1781 came to an end, and early in 1782 came news that Minorca had fallen, and that the forces which had besieged it were on their way to Gibraltar. Intelligence reached Eliott also in April that the Spaniards were making great preparations at Cadiz; and it was evident that they were bracing themselves for a supreme effort. Happily another English

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battalion had joined Eliott in March, making good the losses that he had sustained so far, which helped to hearten the garrison. On the 4th of May the Spaniards' fire slackened, and not a shot was fired by besiegers or besieged for twenty-four whole hours. It was the first time that this had occurred for more than a year. This lull, however, was only the precursor to a more violent storm. Hitherto the Spaniards had made their main effort by land, on the narrow isthmus that connects Gibraltar with Spain. Now they were going to deliver a very powerful attack by sea, for the furtherance of which a French engineer had designed vessels which he boasted to be indestructible and unsinkable. It was the plunging fire from the guns mounted high up on the Rock which was dreaded by ships; and the difficulty was met in this way. Some ordinary ships of large burden were cut down, and, instead of an upper deck, they were covered with a sloping roof composed of three layers of square timber, three feet thick, separated by layers of wet sand and backed by a layer of damp cork. The roof was then covered with wet hides, and the whole was provided with a network of pipes leading from central reservoirs to all parts of the ship. Thus the engineer flattered himself that no shell nor red-hot shot could set these vessels on fire; and that the guns with which they were armed could

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be worked by their gunners in perfect safety. In other words, he was confident that he had constructed indestructible floating batteries. On land the Spaniards now reconstructed their works on a vast scale, one single battery alone requiring a million and a half of sandbags; and altogether the prospect for Gibraltar looked very black.

Eliott, on his side, was not in the least dismayed. He laboured indefatigably to strengthen his own works. A gallery by much labour was cut in the solid rock, from which guns could play upon the Spanish batteries on the isthmus, and his officers had been fertile in the invention of carriages to enable cannon to be depressed to a very acute angle, and such-like matters. His second-in-command was very urgent for the use of red-hot shot; and furnaces for heating these were multiplied. But however cheerful Eliott and his officers might be, some of the men were oppressed with a sense of impending doom. A soldier of the Seventy-third felt this so strongly that he could not keep it to himself. It had, he said, been revealed to him in a dream that on a certain day Gibraltar would fall. He was, of course, brought up before the Governor. "Very well," said Eliott, "hand him over to the Provost-Marshal until the day arrives, and, if the dream does not come true, let him be flogged." After this there was an end of dreams and prophecies.

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All through the blazing summer the men worked and worked, with Eliott's eye upon them night and day. For all that he lived on vegetables, puddings, and water he was as active as any that fed on rations of beef and rum; and he had schooled himself never to need more than four hours' sleep at a time. At last the enemy's preparations were complete, and in August two princes of the blood arrived from France to be present at the capture of Gibraltar. In their courteous, chivalrous way they sent under flag of truce a present of vegetables, game, and fruit for Eliott. He thanked them with equal courtesy, and while accepting the gift, begged that no more might be sent to him. "You have," he said, "obliged me to break my rule never to receive any gift for my private use. Everything is sold publicly here without any preference; and the private soldier, if he has money, can buy as easily as the Governor. It is true that, just at this season, vegetables are scarce; but we are fond of gardening. It is our amusement when we are not on duty; and every man receives a share of vegetables proportioned to the labour which he has expended in raising them."

This answer did not show any want of confidence, and the two princes seem to have arrived a little early, for August passed away without any grand attack. However, Eliott was ready

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even if the French and Spaniards were not, and on the 8th of September he opened fire with red-hot shot upon some of the Spanish land-batteries, kindled the wooden platforms, and destroyed a considerable portion of them. Four days later the French and Spanish fleets sailed into the bay of Gibraltar; and at nine o'clock on the morning of Friday, the 13th of September, the indestructible floating batteries were towed in and moored into position opposite to the King's Bastion, a new work constructed by Eliott himself, which was to be the main point of attack. By this time the strength of the French and Spaniards on land amounted to forty thousand men and two hundred and forty-six guns; while at sea they had fifty ships of the line, ten floating batteries, countless gunboats and bomb-ketches, and three hundred smaller craft. Eliott had by this time seven thousand men and ninety-six guns.

Soon after nine o'clock the action began, and both sides were firing furiously. But there appeared to be some want of unity among the French and Spaniards. The two fleets seemed not to do as much as they ought. The land-batteries for some reason did not co-operate at the right moment; and the indestructible floating batteries, after resisting red-hot shot for some hours, began to smoke ominously. Nevertheless, the fire was terrific; the English works

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were riddled with shot; and the casualties were many. But the British gunners were cool and calm, working their guns with the same precision as at target-practice; and every shot told. Hour after hour they laboured, loading and firing, until they were so much exhausted that they drank the foul water in which they washed their sponge-heads. They went on until some of them dropped, and were relieved by detachments of infantry; but by nightfall they had established a decided superiority, and now the end was at hand.

Throughout the day Eliott had paced the King's Bastion steadily to and fro in the very hottest of the fire, with shot and shell shrieking round him, unmoved and untouched. At nightfall he was still there when, at eight o'clock, the two hundred guns of the floating batteries were firing only an occasional shot and were evidently in difficulties. The boats of the two fleets began to cluster round them, and were instantly the mark for a hail of balls from the batteries of the Rock. Little could be seen of the effect, but a little before midnight the wreck of a launch drifted ashore with twelve exhausted men clinging to it. They explained, on being questioned, that they were the only survivors of a crew of sixty; and Eliott, as we may guess, continued his walk with an expression of grim satisfaction.

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An hour later, at one o'clock on the Saturday morning, there was a sudden flare of light, and the flagship of the floating batteries leaped into flame from stem to stern. Shortly afterwards a second floating battery was kindled, and then a third, and then a fourth; and before four o'clock as many as six were burning furiously. The whole of the bay was as bright as though it were day, and the British batteries, thus lighted to their work, fired without ceasing. And now the British Navy got to work. In May a dozen gunboats had been sent out to Gibraltar in sections and there fitted together; and with these Captain Roger Curtis now sallied out to drive away all French and Spanish boats from the doomed vessels. He found, however, that some of their unfortunate crews were still upon them, and devoted all of his efforts to saving them, for he wanted only the ships, not the men, to be left to burn. Then one of the floating batteries blew up, and then another; and Curtis withdrew lest he and his men should be involved in the destruction. At length day dawned; and Eliott, always in the King's Bastion, could watch the discomfiture of the enemy accomplishing itself. By eleven o'clock five of the ten floating batteries had blown up; three had been burned to the water's edge, and the remaining two were in flames—the one kindled by the British, the other by the Spaniards themselves. By noon

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the fire had ceased, and the action was over. Eliott had lost no more than eighty-three killed and wounded; whereas it was reckoned that two thousand French and Spaniards at least had perished, while between three and four hundred had been taken prisoners. The attack by sea had been defeated with nothing short of disaster.

The attack by land, however, still continued, and Eliott had not only to meet that but to repair his damaged works with all haste lest the naval attack should be renewed. There was no abatement of labour for the garrison nor of anxiety for himself. The allied fleets still kept their stations, and the land-forces pushed their works steadily forward, as though they were bent upon reducing Gibraltar by starvation if they could not by other means. In October arrived news that an English fleet under Lord Howe was coming to the relief of the fortress; and the Spanish Admiral gave orders to his ships to ride at single anchor, so that they could weigh and sail out to meet Howe at the shortest notice. As luck would have it, a gale sprang up on the very next day which threw the Spanish fleet into great confusion, and drove one vessel under the guns of the fortress, helpless and with no choice but to surrender. On the morrow Howe's ships came into sight, but, with the full blast of a westerly gale behind them, could do no other than fly through the Straits into the Mediter-

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ranean, with the French and Spanish fleets, forty-six sail against thirty-three, in hot pursuit. A shift of wind enabled Howe to return, which he did, with the enemy still in chase; and adroitly dropping his convoy of troopships and store-ships in Gibraltar Bay, he sped away homeward with his men-of-war. The Allied fleets never caught him, and they returned no more to Gibraltar. With the reinforcements and supplies brought by Howe, the fortress was safe for another year; and the end was not far off. On the isthmus the Spaniards continued to push their trenches forward as busily as ever, though large bodies of troops could be seen marching back into Spain; and a futile cannonade from guns that grew steadily fewer and fewer was maintained for yet three months. At length, on the 2nd of February 1783, a messenger arrived to report that the war was at an end. On the 5th a last shot of defiance was fired from Gibraltar over the enemy's works, and on the 6th the gates of Gibraltar were opened for the first time since June 1779. The siege had lasted for three years, seven months, and eleven days.

Perhaps Eliott gave himself an extra hour or two of sleep that night, possibly he even allowed himself a glass of wine; certainly we may guess that he sanctioned the issue of an additional tot of rum to the garrison. They had served him well, their only lapse having been the

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plundering of the ruined houses of the merchants, which, probably, he could pardon in his heart though he visited it severely with his hand. Their casualties were not in all the circumstances heavy—eight hundred and sixty-nine dead, considerably more than half of them from sickness, and nine hundred and eleven wounded, most of whom were only temporarily disabled. But it had been a long and weary trial. Gibraltar though pleasant enough in winter is very hot in summer, when the rock is baked through and through; and even in winter there is the wind, called the "levanter," which wreathes its summit in cloud and is unhealthy and depressing. Of course on a spit nearly three miles long by one mile broad there is space to move about; and gardening must have been a welcome distraction from the ordinary routine. But the sense of being none the less penned up, the eternal round of duty, the monotony of the food, the periodic reduction of rations, the misgiving whether the next provision-ships would arrive in time, the uncertainty of the future, must have tempted men very often to break away from discipline. Moreover, the eternal cannonade must have been a strain upon some nerves; for the enemies of the garrison threw into Gibraltar first and last over two hundred and fifty thousand projectiles, making an average of, as nearly as may be, two hundred a day. One

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may be sure too that the Rock was always alive with rumours, mostly false—rumours of hope which were quickly turned to despair, and rumours of despair which were not readily quickened to hope. Then in so long a period of trial men's natural imperfections and ailments of mind and body have free play. Every man has his "bad days," his days when everything goes wrong, when the most patient officer is testy and ill-tempered, the most exemplary old soldier is full of complaints, and the current of irritability runs up and down from subordinate to superiors, until all alike curse the day when they were born and wish all armies at the bottom of the sea. Then it is that the value of a true chief is felt, a chief cool, strong, and patient, with plenty of firmness but also with a sense of the ridiculous, with the faculty of leading but also with the sympathy that comes of fellowship. Such a chief was Eliott, and he had a good and loyal helper in his second-in-command, Robert Boyd. These two would have held the garrison of Gibraltar together if the siege had lasted as long as the siege of Troy.

Parliament voted its thanks to commander and men, and Eliott himself read the vote to the garrison assembled on parade, and concluded with the few simple words: "I beg my faithful companions to accept my own gratitude for their cheerful submission to the greatest hardships,

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their matchless spirit and exertions, and their cheerful contempt of every danger." The Gibraltar which he defended is transformed. The King's Bastion is hardly known even by name. The tomb of Sir Robert Boyd, who by his own request was buried there, has been shifted to a place of greater safety. But some of the furnaces used for heating cannon-shot are still to be seen, and the memory of the great defence can never perish. Eliott himself will stand before the eyes of many generations in the noble portrait by Reynolds in the National Gallery. Let those who pause to contemplate it give a thought also to his faithful companions.

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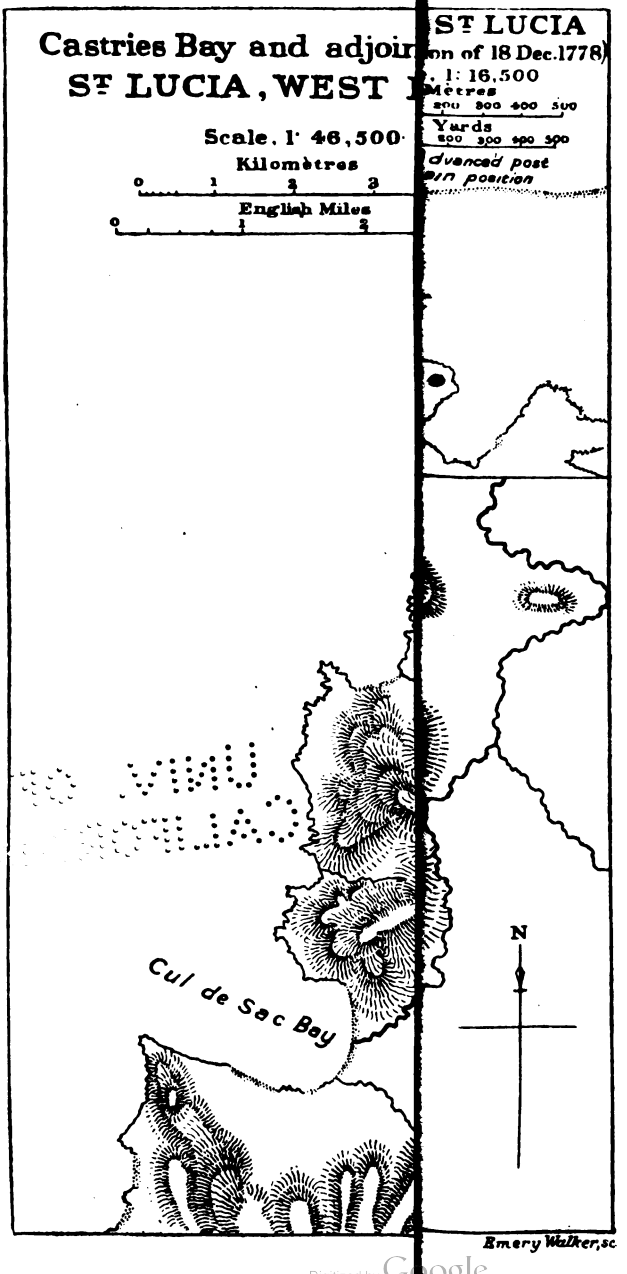

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III

ST LUCIA, 1778

THIS is a story of Navy and Army working together in the most perfect harmony, when great issues hung upon the exact performance of duty by every officer and every man, not merely to the day but to the hour; and every officer and every man was faithful to his trust. It deserves, therefore, to be told in detail.

In the year 1777, after the American rebels had been fighting against us for three years, they gained a great success; and France, eager to pay off old scores, first sent help to the Americans and then joined them in fighting against us. This was a very serious matter, for the war in America demanded every soldier that we could spare, and, with the French fleet against us, it would tax the full strength of the Navy to escort our troops safely across the Atlantic and to protect our commerce, then of enormous value, with our islands in the West Indies. What was to be done? The best way to defend our commerce in the West Indies, said old George III, is to attack the French there. Their starting-

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point for attack is their island of Martinique, where they have an excellent harbour for their fleet. But within thirty miles of Martinique they have another island, St Lucia, with another excellent harbour, strongly fortified, called Castries. Let us attack and take St Lucia before the French can throw a strong garrison into it; and then our fleet can lie at Castries, watch their fleet at Martinique, and sally out to fight it as soon as it leaves port. The plan was sound, and it was resolved to carry it out.

The first thing to do was to equip a fleet under the command of Admiral Barrington, and send it out to Barbados, our own island, which is the most windwardly of all the West Indies. And here I must explain that in the old sailing days all movements in the West Indies were governed by the trade wind, which blows constantly and steadily from south-east, roughly speaking, to north-west. Men did not speak of east and west—they did not even when I was in the West Indies forty years ago—but of windward and leeward. And it is not until you are on the spot that you realise the significance of these terms. St Lucia is ninety miles and Martinique a hundred miles to leeward of Barbados, and you can sail to either of them from Barbados in a few hours; but to beat back against the trade wind from St Lucia or Martinique to Barbados would take several days. At greater distances

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the difference between windward and leeward is still more striking. You could sail from Barbados to Jamaica, twelve hundred miles to leeward, in a week or even less. But if you wished to return from Jamaica to Barbados, the shortest way was to sail back to England and out again. Look out Barbados on the map, and see for yourself. It is a little place, no bigger than the Isle of Wight, and it has no safe harbour. But it has a fair roadstead called Carlisle Bay, where ships can lie except in the worst weather; and from it, as it is the most windwardly, you can sail to any and all of the West Indian islands.

To Barbados, then, the fleet was to be sent, and there a little force of six thousand men was to join them from America. These troops had been trained by two to three years' warfare against the Americans, a most cunning enemy, which had made them also wily and cunning, quick at taking cover, excellent marksmen, accustomed to think for themselves and therefore self-reliant. They would probably have beaten an equal number of any European troops in the open field without the slightest difficulty. But the trouble was that they might not arrive at Barbados in time. There was a strong French fleet on the American coast which was known to be bound for Martinique; and a smart fleet of twelve men-of-war ought easily to outsail a

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mob of forty or fifty hired merchant-vessels filled with troops. For if ships are to sail together—to keep company as it is called—they can go no faster than at the speed of the slowest of them all; and any man-of-war was likely to be a better sailer than an old tub of a merchantman. Moreover, captains of men-of-war have been trained to sail in company, to read signals quickly, and to obey orders promptly; whereas merchant-skippers are accustomed to be independent, and were not, at that time, very fond of receiving commands from the King's officers. In the race for the West Indies between the English transports and the French fleet, therefore, the odds were decidedly in favour of the French fleet.

It was by the merest chance a very real race, for, without knowing it, the English sailed from New York and the French from Rhode Island, which is one hundred and fifty miles east of New York, on the very same day, the 4th of November 1777. The English numbered fifty-nine transports, convoyed by two or three men-of-war, at least sixty sail in all; the French, as I have said, were no more than twelve. The French arrived at Martinique on the 9th of December, and on the very next day, the 10th, the English transports sailed into Carlisle Bay and found Admiral Barrington's fleet waiting there for them at anchor. The French were

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one day ahead, no more; and the race was not yet over, for the goal was Castries, St Lucia; and Barbados, a hundred miles to windward, was, for practical purposes, nearer to Castries than was Fort Royal, Martinique, some forty miles to leeward. Still a gain of twenty-four hours set the two parties in the contest very much on a level; and, if the English were to win, they must not lose one minute.

The English troops had been twenty-seven days at sea, not a very long voyage, according to the standard of the time, but very tedious for men crowded together on small ships with no room to turn round, with only biscuit and salt meat to eat, and with the allowance of water strictly limited. They had had a rough passage too, and a rough passage in a small ship means much discomfort. The decks are constantly flooded with water, and you can hardly stand, sit, or lie down without holding on with one hand or both. So when they reached Carlisle Bay and saw the little town at the head of it, and the low hills behind it, covered with sugar-cane fields and groves of palm, and crowned by dozens of windmills, they must have hoped for at least a little run ashore. But Admiral Barrington's orders were sharp and peremptory—no one to land except the sick; stores and water to be replenished with all possible speed; stand by to start again within twenty-four hours. So there

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the soldiers had to wait, with the tropical sun baking their little ships through and through; and their only comfort can have been to see the boats come alongside with sweet potatoes and yams, and great stalks thick with plantains and bananas—fresh fruit and fresh vegetables which they had not tasted for a month. All night and all day the boats were going to and fro with water and rum and biscuit and salt beef and pork; and then came the signal to weigh anchor, and the entire armament, twelve men-of-war and fifty-nine transports, sailed away to leeward.

The Landing in St Lucia

It is a pleasant little journey from Barbados to St Lucia. The water is of glorious blue and full of flying-fish. You can see them on either hand of you by thousands almost as far as the eye can reach, often with a vast school of porpoises leaping after them in a steady line, as if they were soldiers marching past; and sometimes there is a huge whale or two basking in the sun to make a little variety. Then after a time you can make out two little blue mounds peeping over the horizon, which grow taller and taller as you draw nearer, until at last you realise that they are two twin hills rising side by side, like two gigantic sugar-loaves, straight out of the sea, their red soil half hidden by stunted forest.

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These are the Pitons, four thousand feet high, which mark the southern end of St Lucia. Barrington's ships passed them, and presently the whole island was seen on the port bow—or, as soldiers would say, to your left front—a tumbled mass of mountain and forest. The fleet held on towards the north end of the island—it is barely thirty miles long—and there loomed in sight another great mass of mountain and forest which, the men were told, was Martinique. When the northern end of St Lucia was reached the Admiral altered course to west, and sailing round it altered course once more and stood up the western coast. Then the men could see not only mountains and forest, but little valleys broadening out towards the sea, their lower slopes covered with fields of sugar-cane and plantations of dark, glossy leaves—cacao trees, the fruit of which mixed with sugar and other things gives us chocolate. It was sugar and cacao and spices that made the West Indian planters in the eighteenth century the richest people in the world.

But very soon the soldiers had other things to think about. From three different headlands, as the fleet passed by, there came puffs of white smoke, and the round shot flew skimming over the water, most of them falling far short of the ships but twice striking one or other of them. The men-of-war did not deign to return this

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fire, and the fleet presently came abreast of a deep, narrow bay, shrinking far back into the heart of the hills, with a little cluster of houses at its head. On the north side of it, which was that first reached by the ships, there was a long spit ending in a low knoll, round which were wicked-looking batteries of strong masonry. On the other side towered a great forest-clad hill, rising for more than eight hundred feet straight out of the sea, with a fort of masonry at the summit. The knoll was La Vigie—the Look-out; the great hill was Le Morne Fortuné —Lucky Hill,—a very famous place in West Indian history. The inlet between the two was the harbour of Castries, the very place which the English had come to take. But to attack it with ships, with wooden walls against stone, would have been madness; so the Admiral left it behind, and sailing on for another three miles southward to a little bay called Cul-de-Sac, or Blind Alley, there dropped his anchor. It was Sunday, the 13th of December 1778.

How long a time elapsed before the last transports came in, we know not. It is only certain that Major-General Grant, who was in command, began to land about fifteen hundred of his best troops without the delay of a moment. All through the afternoon boat-loads of red-coats were passing from the ships to the shore; by five o'clock all were ready; and at that hour the

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fifteen hundred, carrying food for one day in their haversacks, marched away to ascend the southern slopes of Morne Fortuné. It was then close upon sunset; and there is no twilight in those latitudes—

> The sun's rim dips; the stars rush out;
> At one stride comes the dark.

And the night is a curious time in the tropics, for it is not silent, as in England, but noisy. The light is hardly gone before hundreds of tree-frogs begin to whistle (they are little fellows which you can put under a small wine-glass, and you marvel that so small a thing can make so much noise), and crickets begin to chirp, and greater frogs begin to croak, some of them with a long, continuous growl like that of a dog. And suddenly the air is full of green and yellow sparks, which flicker and vanish, flicker and vanish incessantly—fire-flies and fire-beetles, which are a kind of winged glow-worm. Through all this clamour of frogs and blaze of fire-flies the column of red-coats tramped steadily on and disappeared into the forest. They had before them a long climb of three miles along a narrow, rough track—a very rough track worn deep by tropical rain; and you may understand better what that means when you remember that more water is shed in an hour of tropical downfall than in twelve

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hours of ordinary English rain. So it was difficult travelling. There was not room for them to move otherwise than in single file, so that the column must have been quite a mile long; and if the leading men stopped or stumbled or even hesitated uncertain of their way, the check was felt along the full length of the mile. It is the constant stopping and starting again, inevitable in night-marches, which makes them so trying and so tiring. Moreover, you must remember that these men had not taken a walk for a month, that they had to carry a heavy musket and ammunition, and that they were wearing their English clothes. The tropic night is always hot; in the heart of the forest it would be muggy and stifling; and, lastly, mosquitoes would swarm and drive the men almost mad.

For two weary miles the soldiers toiled on through the darkness, up and up and up, when suddenly flashes of musketry in their front and a whistle of bullets about their ears made the leading files dash forward, just in time to catch sight of a party of Frenchmen running for their lives. They caught one of them, but he would give no information except that there were plenty of Frenchmen in the island to defend it; and General Medows, who commanded the column, decided to halt and bivouac until day-break, meanwhile sending information to General

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Grant of all that had occurred. Shortly before dawn a strong reinforcement joined them from the ships, and with daylight the march began again. To their surprise they found that they had not yet climbed more than half-way up the hill, and scouts, which had been sent to the front, reported that a party of the enemy was awaiting them in the fortifications at the summit. As they slowly moved on a few round shot from the French cannon came tearing through the forest, and they made up their minds for a desperate fight, for in so narrow a track on so steep an ascent, a very few resolute men could have barred their way. Up and up and up they toiled, and on reaching the top at last were met not by volleys but by a flag of truce. Admiral Barrington had won the race. The French garrison had not arrived; and the great stronghold of Morne Fortuné had surrendered almost without resistance.

Leaving the reinforcements behind him to hold the fort, Medows without any delay marched his original detachment down to the foot of the hill (it is a mile and a half of very steep road and much pleasanter to go down than to go up), and round the head of the harbour to the peninsula of La Vigie. He met with no resistance, and took possession of the whole of the forts and batteries, mounting in all fifty-nine guns, with their ammunition and stores. Port

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Castries was now in possession of the English, and no French fleet could enter it. But Medows's officers and men had no clothes except those on their backs, and they had been drenched to the skin by a tropical shower while on the march round the harbour. Also they had no supply of food, though no doubt they had found enough for the moment in Castries, so they hoped that Admiral Barrington's squadron might come round to them speedily with the baggage and provisions. Meanwhile, in the evening, officers walked to the top of the knoll of Vigie, and, looking out towards Martinique, saw twenty-four sail of ships at sea. After much discussion, they decided that these must be provision-ships from Barbados, and, hoping that they would come in soon, they turned in for the night. So passed Monday, the 14th of December 1778.

On Tuesday morning, the 15th, the strange sail came closer to the shore, and were now seen to be the French fleet, twenty-four ships of war under Count d'Estaing, with from fifty to sixty smaller craft, evidently full of troops, in company. High up on the summit of Morne Fortuné General Grant descried them, and naturally supposing that he could see farther than Admiral Barrington, down in Cul-de-Sac, he sent a messenger in hot haste to warn him. The situation seemed to the General most serious.

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His army depended entirely upon the fleet for food. If that fleet were captured or destroyed —and, with odds of two to one against it, this seemed to be inevitable—then the army must either starve or surrender. It is not surprising if Grant passed some very uneasy hours.

His aide-de-camp hurried with all speed to the Admiral and found him asleep in a hammock on deck. The aide-de-camp roused him and delivered his message. "Young man," said the Admiral drowsily, "I cannot write to the General at present; but tell him that I hope he is as much at ease on shore as I am on board"; and with that he turned over and went to sleep again. He deserved his rest, for he had been hard at work all night. He had recognised the French fleet on the previous evening, and knew exactly what to do. He had packed away the transports neatly within the inlet of Cul-de-Sac Bay and anchored his twelve men-of-war in a line across the entrance, with an arrangement of their cables which enabled him to turn the head of any one of his vessels round, and meet the fire of any one of d'Estaing's ships with the fire of two ships of his own. His only danger was that the French might land troops and send them to the hills above Cul-de-Sac Bay, from which they might drop shells upon the English ships and drive them to sea; but General Grant had provided against this by leaving four

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battalions on that hill to prevent any such attempt. Both Admiral and General had done their duty; and the Admiral was right in considering himself safe.

Some hours later the French fleet came up and twice filed solemnly past the entrance to Cul-de-Sac Bay, firing heavily at long range (for they dared not come closer), with no result beyond wasting a vast amount of ammunition and wounding three men. Then, rightly deciding that he had better leave Barrington alone, d'Estaing worked his way back to Anse du Choc, a bay just the other side of La Vigie, disembarked there such troops as he had with him, and sent his transports back to Martinique for more. By nightfall the disembarkation was completed; and so ended Tuesday, the 15th of December.

On Wednesday and Thursday, the 16th and 17th, while awaiting the arrival of more soldiers, D'Estaing made several attempts to cut off communication between the English fleet and the English army. First, he tried to force his way into Castries harbour; but the fortifications were too strong, and no ship could come within range of the guns of Vigie without the certainty of being sunk. That would not do; so then he made his ships cruise to and fro to prevent supplies from passing between Cul-de-Sac Bay and Castries. By daylight the cruisers were success-

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ful; but at night Barrington's boats crept unseen along the coast into Castries and brought the army all that they wanted. So that also would not do; and yet d'Estaing must do something. He had twice as many ships and twice as many soldiers as the English, and, moreover, contrary to all military rule, the little British force was inevitably dispersed into three distinct bodies. Four battalions were on the hill overlooking Cul-de-Sac Bay, five were in the fort on Morne Fortuné, and three were at La Vigie. If he could overcome any one of the three, he could master the other two; and, if the army were beaten, he could drive Barrington's twelve ships into the jaws of his own twenty-four. On the other hand, if he could beat Barrington's fleet, Grant's army must surrender as a matter of course. The whole situation seemed quite simple, but was just a little irritating to a Frenchman who was proud of the prowess of his country's arms.

Reviewing the matter, he decided that he would attack the weakest detachment, that at La Vigie. The troops that he had landed at Anse du Choc had lain for two days within two miles of Medows's men; and Medows had pushed his outposts so far that the sentries of the two forces had exchanged greetings, and, on one occasion, even a pinch of snuff. On the evening of Thursday, the 17th, a French deserter

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came into Medows's camp and gave intelligence that additional French troops had been disembarked, that they were already so stationed as to isolate Medows's detachment completely, and that twelve thousand men would attack it on the morrow. Twelve thousand men against thirteen hundred is long odds; but Medows was not in the least disturbed. It was likely enough that the deserter's story might be false; but whether it were false or true, Medows was a man of witty tongue who habitually met the most serious situations with a joke. Moreover, he knew his business as a soldier, and felt perfectly confident of the result. His troops were the very best of a very good force—the Fifth (Northumberland Fusiliers), the grenadier companies of eight regiments formed into a grenadier battalion, and the light companies of the same grouped into a light battalion. The eight regiments were the Fourth (Royal Lancaster), Fifteenth (East York), Twenty-seventh (Inniskilling Fusiliers), Twenty-eighth (Gloucesters), Thirty-fifth (Sussex), Fortieth (South Lancashire), Forty-sixth (2nd Cornwalls), and Fifty-fifth (2nd Borderers); and their flank-companies, as they were called, were the cream of them. With such men Medows was prepared to give a good account of himself against any odds.

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The Fight at La Vigie

The spit or peninsula of Vigie runs out from the mainland to the sea for a length of about two miles, with an average breadth of about three-quarters of a mile. But at about the middle of it, its width contracts to an isthmus or neck little more than two hundred yards broad; and here Medows resolved to make his stand, for in a narrow strait there is no space for superior numbers to act, and a great multitude may be stopped by a few resolute men. This isthmus in fact was another pass of Thermopylæ, except that it was shut in not by cliffs but by the sea on either side. But Medows knew better than to place the whole of his men on his own side of the pass; for, if a very few English could hold it against great numbers of French, a very few French could equally hold it against a number of English; and d'Estaing might just leave a thousand men to seal Medows up within the peninsula, and take the remaining eleven thousand to attack the four battalions above Cul-de-Sac Bay. To prevent any such thing Medows stationed five light companies on a hill covered with scrub on d'Estaing's side of the neck, so as to keep the way open, and the rest he drew up on his own side.

Heavy rain fell during the night of Thursday, the 17th of December, and did not clear off and

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allow anything to be seen until seven o'clock on the morning of Friday, the 18th. It was then observed that the French were nearer to the British outposts than usual. Medows went down to his light companies on the hill and was still with them when the officers in rear of the neck observed, to their horror, that two French battalions were moving against the front and flank of the five companies as if to cut them off. They were doubting whether they ought not to advance and rescue their comrades, when Medows came back to them perfectly cool and composed. "The light infantry will take care of themselves," he said; "as for you, stand fast."

And as he spoke the five light companies advanced in skirmishing order, keeping themselves always under cover, and opened fire upon the two French battalions, which were formed in dense columns. The French suffered so heavily that they tried to extend themselves, whereupon the light companies closed up and threatened to charge them with the bayonet. Immediately the French closed up again; but by that time the light infantry were already extended and hidden, pouring in all the time a galling fire. The French then advanced resolutely in solid masses with the bayonet, and the light infantry went back as if beaten and disappeared, but only to renew their fire, always invisible,

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from every direction. At last one of the French battalions gave way, when out ran the light infantry in pursuit and completed the rout with the bayonet. They were returning in a leisurely fashion, breathless and very hot, to their hill when the main body of the French came up, unobserved by them, in solid columns to the attack of Medows's main body, and was in a fair way to cut them off from their comrades in rear of the neck. "Come back, come back," their comrades yelled; but the light infantry could not hear, until at last, regaining the slope of their hill, they saw the danger and dashed into the scrub. It was so thick that the French could not follow them with any speed, but there was a narrow path by which the French might have overtaken them. In this path Captain Downing, Lieutenant Waring, and Privates Rose, Duffy, and Hargrove of the Fifty-fifth turned and stood to cover the retreat of the rest; and the French came speedily upon the devoted five. They parried the French bayonets for some time, but numbers told. Waring presently fell, thrust through the body, and Downing was on the point of sharing his fate when a French officer rushed forward to save him, and then with a significant gesture touched his sword. There was no resisting such an appeal from so noble and chivalrous an enemy; and Downing together with the three privates surrendered. But they had

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accomplished their purpose, for the whole of the light infantry were by that time safe on the English side of the neck; and, though there was no Victoria Cross in those days, they were content without it, for they had done their duty.

And now, to the intense relief and joy of Medows, d'Estaing developed an attack with his whole force upon the main position of the English, filling the slopes of the scrubby hill with sharpshooters, while the main body advanced slowly and steadily in massive columns to sweep away all opposition with the bayonet. He also brought forward some very light artillery; but here Medows was ready for him. He had found in the French batteries two odd twelve-pounder guns which he had placed in position, though there was only a very scanty supply of ammunition for them. He had also four three-pounder cannon, which, though mere pop-guns, throwing a shot no bigger than a tennis ball, seem to have been a trifle heavier than those of d'Estaing. Very speedily he silenced the French artillery, and then turned his guns upon the French infantry, sweeping away whole files of them, but never wholly checking their advance. The French columns indeed behaved nobly, pressing on despite terrible losses and never attempting to fire a shot, though they kept bearing away now to right, now to left, as if seeking a way round the

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English flank. But the French sharpshooters kept up a lively and destructive fire which was only in part suppressed by the English grenadiers, who answered them coolly and quietly, husbanding their ammunition, for they had no more than thirty rounds a man. The English, in fact, were falling fast, though their spirit was wholly unbroken. One officer, Lieutenant Gomm of the Forty-sixth, came staggering to the rear, his face streaming with blood from a wound in the eye. "I hope that you have not lost your eye, sir," said Medows, when he saw him. "I believe I have, sir," answered Gomm, "but with the other I shall see you victorious this day." Medows himself was wounded early, but never left the field for a moment. And so for more than two hours the fight went on, until the French columns began to waver. One of them broke twice and was twice rallied, and at last the whole came to a dead stop, and would advance no more.

But just at this critical moment the English ammunition failed. Medows had long since sent a message across to Morne Fortuné for a supply, and Grant had duly filled up a boat-load or two and despatched them across the harbour without delay. Two soldiers were lifting a box out of the boat when an officer of the grenadiers, named Hill, a man of gigantic strength, took the box from them and carried it

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unaided to the front. The box was opened, and the cartridges were found to be a mere heap of dust, having perished from decay. The grave news was brought to Medows, who, though almost disabled by the pain of his wound, gave his orders at once. All firing must cease forthwith. The men in the firing-line must allow the enemy to advance within close range, give them a final volley, charge with the bayonet, and fall back on the main body. Then the main body itself must await attack in its turn and do likewise, delivering a final charge under the leadership of the General himself in order to conquer or fall.

And then came the finest incident of the whole day. The word was given to "cease fire," and every English soldier obeyed at once. In all the heat of action, with bullets flying thick among them, men who had their muskets actually at their shoulders brought them down undischarged, and waited quietly to be shot down. Major Harris of the Fifth, the future conqueror of Seringapatam, who had carried Medows's order, noted this perfection of discipline with unspeakable pride; and it was he, who, in a letter written many years later, has recorded it as a thing that he could never forget. Meanwhile d'Estaing had brought up fresh troops; and the French, having recovered themselves, now advanced rapidly and with

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determination. The English had almost reached the end of their tether. There was just one round apiece left for the two twelve-pounders. These were fired into the heart of the hostile columns. The French staggered and wavered, and some of them turned about. Harris instantly ordered the grenadiers to reopen fire, with such ammunition as was left, upon the disordered French files; and presently the whole mass of the French faced about and retired. They did not run away, but they went back and advanced no more. The fight was over. It had lasted for three hours, from eight until eleven o'clock in the morning.

The casualties of the English were one hundred and seventy-one, rather less than one-eighth of the numbers engaged, the proportion of the killed being unusually small. The wounds, too, being mostly inflicted by musketry and not by artillery, were not for the most part serious. Medows, it must be mentioned, visited every injured officer and man himself before he would allow a surgeon even to look at his own wound. The casualties of the French were almost exactly the same in proportion to the number engaged as those of the English, rather less than one man in eight; but when the English officers went over the ground after the fight, the sight turned them sick. Four hundred Frenchmen lay there killed outright, and twelve

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hundred more wounded, very many of them grievously shattered by round shot. Every British soldier that could be spared went to minister to these poor fellows, and four hundred French came down under a flag of truce to bury the dead; but after working for six hours they had not finished the task. The English had actually inflicted on the enemy a loss exceeding by nearly one-third the strength of their own fighting men; and such a thing is rare in military history.

Nevertheless, d'Estaing even now would not admit himself to be beaten. On the following day, Saturday, the 19th of December, he sent thirty transports, say three thousand men, to a bay just south of Cul-de-Sac, hoping to seize some heights commanding the position of the British troops which protected Barrington's fleet. The French landed, toiled wearily up to the chosen hill, and found it occupied by a British detachment. Sir Henry Calder, who commanded the four battalions above Cul-de-Sac, had understood the meaning of the French movement at once and had quietly forestalled it. His detachment must have been very weak, for his whole force could not have exceeded eighteen hundred men; but the French, after the lesson of La Vigie, would not venture to attack. They, therefore, re-embarked and sailed back to d'Estaing, who was now at his

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wits' end. For another week he loitered sullenly at St Lucia, and then on Saturday, the 28th of December, he returned to Martinique. There with his superior fleet and army he still menaced St Lucia, but he did nothing more; and nine days later, on the 6th of January 1779, Admiral Byron arrived with his squadron in the West Indies and put an end to the superiority of the French fleet to windward. So Barrington was at length released from Cul-de-Sac Bay; and St Lucia was safe in the hands of the English.

I know no finer example than this of duty and discipline working hand in hand both in Navy and Army. The whole operation was one of great risk, and both naval and military commanders must have known it well. In the first place, the fleet was to come from England and the army from America, so that there was always the chance that each might be destroyed in detail at sea by a superior force. If the convoy of British troops had reached Barbados a week later instead of a day later than d'Estaing's arrival at Martinique—as it very well might—d'Estaing could have beat up to Barbados, held Barrington in check or driven him away, and captured the convoy ship by ship at his leisure. If he had had the luck to bring Barrington to action, he might, with the advantage of two ships to one, have destroyed his fleet, and then the convoy would have lain at his mercy. Even as

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things fell out, there is no getting away from the fact that on the 13th of December, when the English sailed to St Lucia from Barbados with twelve ships and six thousand troops, the French were at Martinique with twenty-four ships and twelve thousand troops; and, though Barrington and Grant may not have been aware of the exact numbers against them, they cannot but have felt some misgivings lest they might be sailing to disaster. But they never allowed such feelings to govern them for one moment. They had received orders to carry out a certain operation; and it was their duty to obey. The operation might be — must be — extremely hazardous, so hazardous that it was hardly fair to call upon them to undertake it. But that was no affair of theirs. They would almost certainly be blamed and professionally ruined, if it failed; but they must take that risk too. Their duty was plain, to obey orders, do their best, and ask no questions.

But to do their best, they must demand great exertions from their men. It was not fair, for instance, to ask soldiers who had been mewed up in transports for a month to go ashore suddenly in the tropics, make a night march in single file over mountain and forest, and fight an action in the morning. Officers and men were bound, through no fault of their own, to be weak and slack from want of exercise, and

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the exertion would consequently involve more than ordinary fatigue. If any man fell sick or broke down, his comrades would have to carry him as best they could, which signified more fatigue. As it happened, the action at Morne Fortuné in the morning did not take place, which was some relief; but even so, Medows's detachment had to march on down to the harbour and right round it to La Vigie, which is at least another six miles. And six miles in the full heat of the tropical morning, even to a man in good condition, is rather exhausting. Try it and see for yourself. And these men had no protection from the sun, no sun-helmets nor other tropical gear, nothing but three-cornered hats, long red coats, breeches, and black gaiters from knee to foot. But it never occurred to them to regard their exertions as anything out of the common. Orders were orders, and must be obeyed; and they did obey cheerfully.

Of the beautiful dovetailing of the work of Navy and Army I have already said enough. Every officer knew that if the red-coats were beaten the blue-jackets were gone, and that if the blue-jackets were beaten the red-coats were gone. Barrington took good care that the fleet and transports should not be touched with impunity, so d'Estaing turned his strength against the red-coats. Medows did exactly the right thing, and did not despair even when

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ammunition failed him. He ordered his men to cease fire and be shot, without shooting back, and they obeyed on the instant. Harris, seeing that a moment was come when Medows's order must be set aside, promptly disregarded it, did the right thing and saved the day. Then d'Estaing tried his fortune on the heights above Cul-de-Sac. The English commander there, Sir Henry Calder, did the right thing, and d'Estaing in despair gave up the task of fighting British sailors and soldiers, even with odds of two to one in his favour, because they always did the right thing.

And what came of it in the end? These noble soldiers, and many of the sailors too, were mostly dead of yellow fever within six months. That was the rule in the West Indies in those days. But Grant held on to St Lucia with desperate tenacity, knowing its inestimable value to the Navy. He was ordered to weaken the garrison, and was censured because he did not, but nothing would move his resolution. And so it was that in April 1782, when the revolted Colonies of America, France, Spain, and Holland were all fighting against us and the future seemed very black, Admiral Rodney, having his fleet in Castries harbour, saw the French fleet sail out of Martinique, dashed out in pursuit, and overtaking it won the great battle of the Saints. This brought home to our enemies that we were

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not yet beaten, and that it would be well for them to make peace when they could.

The glory of the West Indies has departed, and we treat them now as no more than a pleasant resort for the winter. But if ever you go to St Lucia, think not only of its surpassing beauty, but remember the brave men who fought there with Barrington and Grant.

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ROBERT ROLLO GILLESPIE

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IV

ROBERT ROLLO GILLESPIE

WHO is the bravest man that ever wore the red coat of a British soldier? He may be alive now. But I am writing of times long before the Victoria Cross was instituted or even thought of; and I am inclined to answer the question with the name of Robert Rollo Gillespie. You have never heard of it in your life, you will say. That is very likely; so let me tell you about him.

He was born in Ireland of Scottish parents in 1766, an only son and an only child. From the very first he seems to have been mad about soldiering, and he joined the Carabiniers as a cornet when he was just over seventeen. His next adventure was to fall in love with a girl at first sight, and he ran away with her and married her before he was twenty-one. A few months later, in consequence of an altercation, he fought a duel with one of his neighbours. The two exchanged shots without hurting each other, and the seconds urged that the matter should end there. But Gillespie's opponent, far from being satisfied, heaped insult after insult upon him,

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whereupon Gillespie pulled his handkerchief out of his pocket, held one corner of it himself, and challenged the angry man to take the other and settle the difference across it. Both fired at the same moment. His opponent's bullet struck one of Gillespie's buttons and glanced off, inflicting only a slight wound. Gillespie's bullet sped straight into his adversary's heart. He and his second were tried and acquitted, there being no doubt that he had acted on the grossest provocation.

In July 1791 he was promoted lieutenant into the Twentieth (Jamaica) Light Dragoons, and in 1792 sailed for Jamaica to join his new regiment. He was attacked by yellow fever on the very first night of his arrival and very narrowly escaped death. In 1793 England declared war on revolutionary France; and an expedition was sent from Jamaica to occupy the French colony of Haiti, then reputed to be the richest possession in the world. It was governed at that moment by a couple of republican fanatics who had proclaimed the emancipation of the negroes; and the place, both for this reason and because of the climate, was a hornet's nest into which we should never have ventured. However, we did send a number of troops there, first and last, and there was plenty of fighting in which Gillespie, risen to the rank of Captain, took a prominent part. He was in every dan-

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gerous assault; and once, when it was thought advisable to summon the republican Governor of Port-au-Prince to surrender, Gillespie and a naval officer, Captain Rowley, volunteered to carry the summons. It was a dangerous mission, for the fanatical Governor was a man who stuck at nothing; but the two swam ashore from Captain Rowley's ship with their swords in their mouths. They were fired at as they swam, but landed safely, and were at once taken before the Governor, who threatened to shoot them as spies. The story runs that Gillespie, observing a masonic emblem upon the Governor's dress, made a secret masonic sign and was thenceforward treated with civility; but, however that may be, he and Rowley were sent safely back to their ship though bearing an indignant rejection of the summons.

Towards the autumn of 1794 Gillespie, worn out by excessive fatigue, by more than one wound, and by the exhausting effects of the climate, went home on sick-leave. The ship in which he was travelling was wrecked in the Channel, all of his possessions were lost, and he reached London absolutely destitute. After nearly a year at home, he again embarked for the West Indies at Cork, where, before starting, he had a pugilistic encounter in the theatre with a man who refused to take off his hat when "God save the King" was played, and handled

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him pretty roughly. The matter might have ended there had not his victim been engaged to a lady, who, hearing that he had fought and been beaten, threw him over. Boiling with rage, the unfortunate man obtained a warrant for Gillespie's apprehension; whereupon Gillespie, fearful of losing his passage and the coming campaign, went on board his transport disguised as a soldier's wife. The police duly came and searched the ship for him; but Gillespie, having borrowed a baby from a real soldier's wife, supported his assumed character admirably. He was, it must here be mentioned, a very tiny little man, so that there was no difficulty about his height; and with a large cap, or possibly a bonnet, to hide the upper part of his face, he could bend his nose lovingly over the baby and so conceal the whole of his features. In any case, he escaped recognition and so got safely away.

Thus he was able to go through the last campaign in Haiti. I shall not dwell upon it, and indeed very little is known about it. It is very rarely that an important expedition is begun, continued, and ended without some printed account by an officer who took part in it. But there is none of the three years' war in Haiti, for few lived to write it. Actions were fought and fortresses were stormed with good success, but the real enemy was the climate, and the climate beat us. Battalions perished as fast

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as they were landed. One was actually extinguished from the colonel to the drummer. This kind of thing could not go on. In this last campaign Gillespie was, as usual, always to the front when danger called for him; and, towards the end, being taken on to the staff, he showed that he had brains as well as bravery. But neither ability nor courage could avail against yellow fever; and at last, in July 1798, General Maitland took upon himself the responsibility of evacuating the island.

It was while the troops were waiting to embark at St Nicolas Mole and to quit the pestilent island altogether that Gillespie went through one of his most famous adventures. One night when lying asleep he was wakened by loud cries below stairs. Up he jumped in his nightgown, seized his sword, and running down to his black servant's room found him lying in a pool of blood, with one arm almost severed at the shoulder, and eight armed ruffians, black and white, standing over him to finish their bloody work. At once they rushed upon Gillespie, for he was in fact the victim whom they meant to murder; but the little man stood up to them and he actually killed six of them there and then; whereupon the remaining two begged for mercy. Gillespie bade them be gone; but, as they went out, one of them turned round and fired at him, the bullet cutting away some of

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his hair, grazing the temple, and severing the temporal artery. The street-patrol, hearing the shot, at once entered the house and saw the six dead bodies, but no Gillespie. He had staggered upstairs and fainted on his bed, where he was found bleeding to death, but fortunately not so far gone but that with care and time he recovered. Upon returning to England he was presented to the King at St James's, where George III, a big, tall, burly man himself, looked down on him with amazement. "What," he said; "can it be possible that this little man is the person who performed so great an exploit in St Domingo?"

His health being re-established he returned to Jamaica, where he now found himself Lieutenant-Colonel in command of the Twentieth Dragoons. As such he was distinguished not only by the excellent order in which he kept his regiment, but by his extreme care of his men. The Twentieth was a great institution in Jamaica. Though one of the cavalry regiments of the British line, it was for a time permanently quartered in the island and paid out of its revenues, so that the planters felt a proprietary interest in it. When there was a ball at Government House the eight trumpeters of the Twentieth—four of them playing horns and four of them bassoons—supplied the music, eked out by a few negro fiddlers. Now the accommoda-

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tion provided for soldiers in Jamaica in those days, and for full thirty years later, was shocking; and the mortality among them was appalling. Moreover, many men, who might have been saved, were lost because they were no sooner out of hospital than they were sent back to their barracks to live on salt beef and salt pork. Now Gillespie not only made his own regimental hospital a model, but he took advantage of the Jamaicans' pride in the Twentieth to obtain additional delicacies for his convalescents and temporary quarters for them in healthy districts. He often had six or seven convalescents in his own house to set the example. The result was that his men adored him, while his military superiors valued him so highly that, though two generals who were entrusted with small expeditions in the West Indies begged for his services, the Governor of Jamaica, with many compliments to him, refused to let him go. Among his regimental officers, however, there was one base and jealous enough to insinuate that Gillespie's zeal for the welfare of his men was really due to a desire to fill his own pockets. This creature was so persistent in his accusations that Gillespie was obliged to ask for a court-martial; and so it was that many good deeds that he had done for his men by stealth were brought into the light. He was, of course, triumphantly and most honourably acquitted.

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At the peace of Amiens the Twentieth was brought home, and in 1805 Gillespie exchanged the command of it for that of the Nineteenth Light Dragoons, a regiment which was quartered permanently in India and is famous in Indian military history. Though we were at war with France and travelling on the Continent was a matter of considerable risk, Gillespie must needs make his way to India overland. He started from Hamburgh, which was so closely watched by the French that he was obliged to disguise himself, and proceeded by way of Vienna through Serbia to the Black Sea, where he took ship for Constantinople. On the voyage he discovered that the master of the ship was making for a piratical port, no doubt with intent to rob or murder him, or possibly to sell him for a slave; whereupon he loaded his double-barrelled fowling-piece, and holding it to the master's head until he altered course, compelled him to bring the ship into Constantinople. There he ran against an insolent French officer, who insulted him, whereupon Gillespie promptly called him out. They fought with swords, when Gillespie, to the French officer's great surprise, very speedily wounded and disarmed him, and so taught him manners. From Constantinople he went down to Greece, and, avoiding Western Asia Minor, crossed the sea to Iskandarun, and proceeded by way of Aleppo. Here he fell

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among a party of nomad Arabs, and was in a fair way to be robbed and murdered, had not the chief been seized with a violent stomach-ache which Gillespie, having some drugs with him, was able to cure. He was then most hospitably entertained and escorted safely to Baghdad, whence he made his way down the Euphrates to Basra, and there took ship to Bombay. Had he written a book about this journey he would have made a name among the early travellers over a little-known and dangerous country.

He reached Madras from Bombay early in 1806 and was appointed to the command at Arcot, a city famous as the place where Robert Clive began his great career. He had not been there for more than a few days when there broke out at Vellore, some fifteen miles away, a military mutiny which promised to be as formidable as the later mutiny of 1857. In the fort at Vellore were four hundred British soldiers of the Sixty-ninth regiment and about fourteen hundred sepoys. Before dawn of the 10th of July, the sepoys overpowered the guards and sentries, murdered several officers and men, and bringing up two cannon began to play upon the barracks of the Sixty-ninth. Surprised in their sleep, the Sixty-ninth at first were helpless; but two small parties managed to rally and offer some resistance; and officers, who lived outside

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the walls, guessing what had happened, sent urgent messages to Arcot for help.

Gillespie was just starting for a morning ride with one of his officers when the news reached him. He at once ordered out a squadron of the Nineteenth and some troops of native cavalry, and very soon was galloping with them on the road to Vellore, having left orders for the rest of the regiments to follow. Far ahead of his men he reached the gateway of the fort of Vellore, above which a little party of the Sixty-ninth was still resisting, though at the last gasp from want of ammunition. One of them, a sergeant who had served in Jamaica, recognised him and cried out that God Almighty had sent Colonel Gillespie from the West Indies to the East to save their lives. There were, however, four gates to be passed before Gillespie could join them, of which two were closed. Some of the Sixty-ninth by linking their belts together lowered themselves to the ground, under a heavy fire, and opened the first of these from within. The other resisted all their efforts, but Gillespie, never at a loss, broke in the wicket, and so obtained entrance for himself, another officer, and three men. He then tried desperately to force the gate open from within, but in vain. Then seeing a rope on the ground he threw it to the men of the Sixty-ninth above the gateway over his head, swarmed up it and seizing a

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regimental colour rallied the disheartened men to him. Then placing himself at their head he charged a battery of three guns which the mutineers had placed in position, drove the gunners from them, and turned them against the mutineers. Gillespie had not a round of ammunition for them, but the sepoys, none the less, at first broke up in terror; and valuable time was gained before they reassembled.

Presently the main body of the Nineteenth arrived before the gateway and Gillespie hastened to them to direct their movements. They had brought two light cannon with them with which they presently blew open the closed gate; but meanwhile the mutineers had had time to bring two guns forward and plant them so as to command the narrow ingress from the gate. Until these guns were removed or captured, entry into the fort was out of the question, for the men of the Nineteenth would simply have been mown down as fast as they showed themselves; one gun firing with grape, while the other was reloaded. So back went Gillespie to his rope, swarmed up to the little party of the Sixty-ninth again, and leading them forward swept the mutineers from their guns with the bayonet. A good many of his soldiers fell dead in the charge, but Gillespie was untouched, and with him at their head the handful of men was irresistible. Then the Nineteenth rode in and cut down

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every sepoy that they could see. Some of the mutineers fled out of the fort, but were caught by squadrons waiting for them outside. Others took refuge in buildings and resisted desperately, but some of the Nineteenth, dismounting, quickly made an end of them. By ten o'clock in the morning all was quiet. Of the Sixty-ninth, fifteen officers and more than one hundred men had been killed outright, and five officers and seventy-six men wounded. Of the revolted sepoys there was left not one.

It is hardly too much to say that by his promptitude and daring Gillespie saved India, for the conspiracy to mutiny was widespread, and, had the outbreak at Vellore been successful, there is no saying how far the mischief might have spread. And the whole affair turned upon a question of moments. Had Gillespie delayed scaling the wall but for five minutes the little party above the gateway would have been annihilated, and not a soul of the garrison would have escaped. But it is not every man of forty who after eleven years of service in appalling climates, to say nothing of many wounds, has the activity to swarm up a rope. The East India Company, fully recognising the worth of his service, made him a present of £3500.

The Nineteenth being ordered home, Gillespie, in order to remain in India, exchanged to the

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command of the Eighth Light Dragoons, and presently was appointed to the command of a brigade of cavalry at Ludhiana, which improved greatly under his training. Meanwhile, of course, he went tiger-shooting during his leave, and while thus employed in the district of Kumaon he had another strange adventure. The Raja of Kumaon, who was at war with his neighbours, the Sikhs, offered Gillespie the command of his troops, begging him to enter his service. Gillespie, of course, refused; whereupon the Raja surrounded his little camp with armed men and threatened to take him by force. Gillespie called the chief of this armed party before him, pulled out his watch, and said: "Tell your master that if he does not recall his men within half an hour and leave the road open, I will take his fort from him and drive him out of his country." Within half an hour the forces were withdrawn and the way was open, though Gillespie, of course, had not a single soldier with him. Later on he went down after tiger to Mysore, where he actually rode down a full-grown tiger and killed him with a hog-spear, a feat so dangerous that it is very rare. Not many men have ridden down and speared a leopard, much less a tiger.

In January 1809 he exchanged into yet another regiment, the Twenty-fifth Light Dragoons, long ago disbanded; whereupon

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the non-commissioned officers and men of the Eighth sent him a letter of farewell, signed by every one of them, in which they proposed, with his consent, to give him a sword worth two hundred guineas. "Brother soldiers," wrote Gillespie when he sent his answer of thanks, "the sword you offer is of too great value. Let it be less so, and without any ornament but the inscription, *The Gift of the Royal Irish*, which will make it more valuable to me than were it covered with gold."

Though still only a Colonel he was next appointed to the command of a large body of troops at Bangalore—the place where he speared the tiger,—and in 1811 he was entrusted with that of the first division in the expedition for the capture of Java. Not many people have ever heard of this campaign in Java; but it did take place; and the Madras troops, with which Gillespie was, were three months at sea in their hot, stuffy transports before they reached their destination. They were the first to land, on the 4th of August, and the first to advance in order to cover the movements of the rest. The country was unhealthy, low and flat, with a network of canals and ponds and scraps of dry land, highly cultivated, between them. On the sixth day Gillespie and the whole of his staff were poisoned by some drugged coffee given them by a treacherous Javanese servant. They

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poured what was left of the coffee down the culprit's throat; and, though poisoning is not the best preparation for a hard day's work and a sharp action to follow, Gillespie was indefatigably active. A fortnight later came the storm of the enemy's entrenched camp, known as the lines of Cornelis. The most important part of the work, as always in this campaign, was committed to Gillespie, and most difficult it was, the country being so intricate that it was only by the greatest care that the troops could be guided to their places, while the ways were so narrow and swampy that no horse could travel along them. Gillespie, therefore, though suffering from fever, was obliged to accompany his troops on foot. He himself led the attack on three redoubts and a fortified bridge, and with his own hand took a French brigadier-general prisoner. In the course of the engagement he was much shaken by the explosion of a captured magazine and received what is called a severe contusion, that is to say, a blow from a more or less spent bullet which turned half of his body black and blue. When the lines had been carried, he fainted from pain and fatigue in the arms of his staff. No sooner had he recovered than he took a gun-horse from a captured limber, mounted it and galloped off to lead the pursuit of the enemy in the open country beyond the lines. For three miles he hunted them ruth-

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lessly, and when at last he drew rein the hostile army had ceased to exist. His own individual captures for the day were two generals and one colonel, besides another colonel killed in single combat. In the whole history of the Army no one man has ever distinguished himself so greatly in one action as Gillespie at the lines of Cornelis. When the affair was finally over he collapsed, and was brought to the very brink of the grave by fever and exhaustion.

However, the capture of Java was shortly accomplished, and Gillespie was left in military command, which was no sinecure. The native chiefs were some of them still defiant; and twice during 1812 Gillespie had to lead little expeditions to compel them to submission. On the first occasion he walked boldly into a fort with an escort of seven grenadiers, and by sheer moral ascendancy awed the defenders into submission. On the second he stormed with twelve hundred men a huge, fortified enclosure, three miles in circumference and defended by seventeen thousand men, and secured the person of the offending chief, receiving himself a severe wound in the arm while harrying him out of his last refuge.

In October 1812 he returned to India and took up the command of Meerut, whence he was summoned in 1814 to command a division in our first and last war with the Gurkhas of

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Nepal. This was the first mountain-campaign ever conducted by the East India Company's army, and its difficulties, as well as the fighting powers of the Gurkhas, were very greatly underrated by the chief military authorities. Gillespie himself was under no illusions and anticipated some very sharp fighting. On the 28th of October he found himself stopped by the fort of Kalunga. "It stands," he wrote, "on the summit of an almost inaccessible mountain and covered with an impenetrable jungle, the only approaches commanded and stiffly stockaded. It will be a tough job to take it, but by the first of next month I think I shall have it." He formed his plans carefully for attacking Kalunga by the simultaneous assault of four converging columns. As sometimes happens, everything went wrong. Three of the four columns lost their way, and the fourth under Gillespie's own direction was more than once repulsed. He then placed himself at their head for a final effort, and had carried them forward almost to the foot of the walls, when he fell dead with a bullet through his heart. Had he been spared for five minutes longer he might have vanquished the fort by the sheer magic of his leadership, but after his fall the troops fell back in dismay.

He was happy in his death—killed in action before he had ever known defeat, and before

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disease, wounds, and hardship had stiffened his limbs or dulled his unquenchable ardour. He died, Sir Robert Rollo Gillespie, K.C.B., with one medal on his coat for Java. Had he lived in these days he would have been smothered with Victoria Crosses, Distinguished Service Orders, and Military Crosses. Probably not one soldier in a hundred of the present British Army has ever heard his name; but reviewing his career again I still think him the bravest man who ever wore the King's uniform. Still let us beware of looking upon him as a mere fire-eater. He was much more than that. He was a thoroughly skilful and well-trained soldier, who would think out plans of action with foresight and thoroughness as well as carry them into execution with amazing coolness and valour. Moreover, he could make good soldiers as well as lead them, and he was always careful and thoughtful for the health and well-being of his men. We may conjure up visions of him fighting his duel across a handkerchief, dispersing a gang of robbers in his nightgown, or galloping at the head of pursuing cavalry on a gun-horse. There is no end to the exciting scenes in which he is the most prominent figure. They are so many that one must hope that they may never be vulgarised by presentation on a film. But I like best to think of him as a little man in white cheering up his convalescent soldiers in

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the verandah of his house in Jamaica, as anxious to save their lives as he was reckless in hazarding his own. It is good to live on the scroll of fame; but to live in the hearts of men is still better.

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V

FATHERS AND SONS

THERE is no severer strain upon military duty and discipline than to be confronted with the rival duties which are asserted by close ties of kinship. It is accepted as a matter of course that soldiers must leave parents, wives, brothers, sisters, children, upon the King's order; and no words need be wasted over anything so commonplace. Wives occasionally follow their husbands into action, as did Mrs Harry Smith and Mrs Dalbiac in certain battles of the Peninsula, and, even more notably, the famous Mrs Christian Ross who faithfully attended her husband with a bottle of beer all through the battle of Malplaquet until he was killed before her eyes. But such examples do not concern us here. Again it is of frequent occurrence that fathers and sons are fighting together in the same army, or in the same division, brigade, or even regiment. But it is not common for father and son to be close together and for one to see the other fall in action, when the struggle between military duty and filial or parental duty necessarily

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becomes painfully acute. Whether such a thing occurred during the late German War, I know not; though where our combatants were counted by millions it is likely enough. The few examples which I can give of this tragedy are of earlier time.

The first, of course, is that of old John Talbot and young John Talbot before the walls of Chatillon, which we all know through the pages of Shakespeare. But there is nothing of military discipline in the scene presented by the poet. Father and son each wish the other to fly and himself to perish; and finally they agree both of them to stay together as a point of honour and affection. And it is likely enough that this was what happened, to all reasonable intent, for the sense of military duty and discipline was not yet born. The bare facts of the matter are that old John Talbot, being eighty years of age, rode a pony in the hopeless assault of Chatillon and was the only mounted man in the entire host. The pony fell dead under him, pinning him to the ground; and old John was killed where he lay. Young John refused to leave his father and was slain by his side. It is a pathetic story enough, but it is characteristic rather of two brave English gentlemen than of two disciplined officers.

Now let us pass over three centuries, from Friday, the 20th of July 1453, which was the

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death-day of the Talbots, to Sunday, the 8th of July 1755. On that fatal Sunday General Braddock's column of the Forty-fourth and Forty-eighth regiments and some American militia, two thousand men in all, after a month's weary groping through interminable forest towards the Ohio, found themselves under a hail of bullets from a ring of unseen enemies on every side. There was a wild panic and three-fourths of the British and Americans were destroyed. Sixty out of eighty-five officers fell; and among them Sir Peter Halket, Colonel of the Forty-fourth, and one of his sons. Four years later, when a detachment of General Forbes's force came to bury the dead, two skeletons were found lying apart from the rest under a tree; and Major Halket, of Forbes's staff, identified one of them, from a peculiarity in the teeth, as that of his father, Sir Peter. The other he could not doubt was that of his brother; so he wrapped the two in a single plaid and buried them together. What had actually happened to bring the two together—whether the father was stricken first and was defended to the death by the son, or whether both were disabled and tortured in company by the savage Red Indians—no one knows nor ever will know. Some poet of the future may perhaps make the subject a theme for such another scene as Shakespeare's of the two John Talbots.

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Again we leap forward nearly a century. It is Saturday, the 13th of January 1849, and we are in the Punjab with Sir Hugh Gough, who has brought up his army before the screen of jungle that hides the Sikh position at Chilianwala. It is three o'clock in the afternoon; the heavy guns have been playing upon the Sikh trenches for an hour past; and Brigadier-General Pennycuick has received the order to lead his brigade to the attack. His aide-de-camp is his son; and he has with him the Twenty-fourth (South Wales Borderers) and two sepoy battalions. He forms them in a single line and they plunge into the jungle. The Twenty-fourth, a strong battalion of eager young soldiers, soon distances the two native battalions. It is their business to lead the attack, and they tear their way through the jungle not the less impatiently because the shot from the Sikh guns is crashing through the trees all round them, and great branches are falling heavily about their ears. At length they emerge into the open, breathless and disordered, within short range of the Sikh cannon. A blast of grape cuts great gaps among them, but they rush on, and, mad with excitement, disperse themselves to spike the guns. The Sikh infantry, seeing how few and scattered are their assailants, rush in superior numbers to the counter-attack and catch them at a disadvantage. There is a short but furious struggle,

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and then the Twenty-fourth give way and disappear into the jungle having lost twenty-one officers and five hundred men. But their brigadier is not with them. He was shot dead close to the guns, and his son, springing to his assistance, was instantly shot dead likewise upon his father's body. Father and son will be buried in one grave this evening when Gough, after many mishaps, has carried the position. They have done their duty; and there is no more to be said.

Now let us go back forty-three years to Tuesday, the 1st of November 1805. Since August, General Arthur Wellesley in the South of India and General Gerard Lake in the North had been engaged in fighting against the Mahrattas the battles which were to decide whether English or Mahrattas should be masters of the Indian Peninsula. Gerard Lake had become an ensign in the First Guards at the age of fourteen; he had gone on active service with his regiment two years later, and fought through three campaigns in Germany before he was turned twenty; and he also served for two years in America under Cornwallis. Then for ten years he was idle, being much about the Court of George, Prince of Wales, which was not a healthy or invigorating atmosphere; but he came to the front immediately when the great war began in 1793. It was he who led the

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brigade of Guards at Linselles, where, finding his own three battalions confronted by twelve French battalions, he attacked without hesitation, drove off the French in utter rout and captured eleven guns. After further good work in other fields he arrived in India as Commander-in-Chief in 1801. He had not forgotten his years of pleasure in London; and his camp on the Ganges in July 1803 was the merriest and the most luxurious ever seen in India. The officers were allowed to keep their wives and families with them; there was abundance of good wine; there was a ballroom; and there was plenty of big game in the neighbourhood for those who cared to risk their lives in pursuit of it. One officer, indeed, rode down and speared a tiger, but would have paid for his foolhardiness with his life had not Lake shot the creature with a pistol in the nick of time. Like Robert Gillespie, Gerard Lake was fearless of man or beast; but, though unlike him, he was fond of the good things of this life, he was temperate, spare of frame, and, though now in his sixtieth year, of restless energy and incapable of fatigue.

With some fifteen thousand men he opened his campaign. His enemy was by no means to be despised. They had infantry, trained and led by French officers, far exceeding in number Lake's entire army; they had swarms of irregular horse, and an artillery much superior to Lake's both in

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calibre and quantity of guns, which was manned by very staunch and gallant gunners. In two actions at Aligarh and Delhi, Lake inflicted severe defeats on the Mahrattas and took from them all their French commanders. But they could still at the end of October assemble nine thousand regular infantry, five or six thousand horse, and seventy-two guns, whereas Lake, having been compelled to provide garrisons for the places that he had captured, had remaining with him only his cavalry—about a thousand British and twice as many Indians, five battalions—about five hundred British and two thousand Indians, and forty-eight guns. The enemy had the start of Lake, who, eager to overtake them, rode off with his cavalry alone at eleven o'clock on the night of the 31st of October, and at five o'clock next morning, after a march of twenty-five miles, came up with them in a strong position. He attacked them with his cavalry to hold them and prevent them from retreating further until his own infantry should come. At eleven o'clock his five battalions arrived, much exhausted after a march of twenty-five miles in eight hours. Lake granted them an hour's halt for breakfast; and soon after noon the battle began.

At the first matters went ill for Lake. He had manœuvred to attack the enemies' flank, thinking that the Mahratta infantry had not the training nor the steadiness to meet such a

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movement. But the Mahratta leader knew his business, and with great skill made a counter-manœuvre, which exposed the British themselves to a flanking fire. The British guns were completely outmatched by the Mahratta cannon. By some accident only half of Lake's infantry came up at once to its appointed place; and, as it was impossible to keep them standing still under the full blast of the Mahratta artillery, Lake had no choice but to order them to advance at once. The Mahratta gunners allowed them to approach within close range and then gave them a murderous salvo of canister-shot, while at the same time a mass of Mahratta cavalry bore down upon their exposed flank. The Seventy-sixth (2nd Duke's), which had been Lake's standby in all his actions, with superb steadiness beat off the enemy's horse, but the latter quickly rallied and were menacing a second charge when the Twenty-ninth Light Dragoons, summoned by Lake, came galloping up, and the Mahratta cavalry quickly retreated. But the issue of the action hung trembling in the balance, and just at this moment the British troops saw their leader go down.

Lake was on his feet in a moment. His horse had been shot under him; and his son, who was his galloper, at once dismounted and offered his own horse. Lake at first refused it, possibly preferring at such a crisis to lead his men on

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foot; but upon his son's entreaty he consented to take the animal, and young Lake thereupon took a horse himself from a trooper. Young Lake had just swung himself into the saddle when he was struck by a cannon-shot and fell to the ground at his father's feet. For one fleeting moment Lake forgot everything in the anguish of seeing his son killed, as he thought, before his eyes. But it was only for a moment. Turning his back upon him he mounted his horse and was again directing the battle. It was a long and stubborn struggle; for the Mahrattas fought most nobly, but by nightfall their host had been utterly swept away. Two thousand prisoners represented all that survived of their nine thousand infantry, and their seventy-one guns, with their gunners lying dead under them, were left stark and silent on the field.

And this was all Lake's own doing, for his presence and example alone carried his troops onward to victory. It must be remembered that they had marched twenty-five miles, most of the distance under a burning sun, before they began to fight at all; and they had to meet more than double their number of really valiant men who had greatly superior artillery, and had, in fact, the better of them in all points except in the matter of leaders. "The enemy," wrote Lake privately to the Governor-General, "fought like devils or rather like heroes . . .

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and if they had been commanded by French officers, the event would, I fear, have been extremely doubtful. I never was in so severe a business before in my life or anything like it, and pray to God I may never be in such a situation again." This is not the tone of an exultant conqueror, but of one who thinks himself fortunate to have escaped a great disaster; and but for Gerard Lake the battle of Laswarri would have been lost. How he escaped death no one could understand, for he was always in the heaviest of the fire. Of his not very numerous staff two were killed, and four, including his son, were wounded. He himself had two horses killed under him, one a great favourite, given to him by the Viceroy and christened by the characteristic name of "Old Port"; and his coat was burned by the fire of a matchlock, discharged at a range of a yard or two, though the bullet by some miracle missed him. But his personal bravery was a proverb in the army, for it was said that in the hour of danger his pulse seemed to beat more slowly and his brain to work more clearly than at any other time.

But it is not to exalt his bodily courage that this account of him is written. The greatest moment of his life was undoubtedly that at which he turned his back upon the mutilated body of his son and forgot all else in the recollection of his

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duty. The men of the Seventy-sixth witnessed the whole incident. They knew that they stood in great peril. They knew that only one man could pluck them out of it. Some of them may have wondered whether their chief might not linger for just two minutes and neglect them for his son. But he passed his son by, just as they had passed by their own wounded comrades. He would not ask of them more than he would give himself. Lake had the personal magnetism which is the magical gift of all great leaders; but can it be doubted that his magnetism became doubly magnetic when he rode up to his men on his son's horse? Only by superhuman effort did he win the victory, but his strength was superhuman, because, under a supreme trial of discipline, he had done his duty.

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VI

BURRARD AND MOORE

THERE are few things which the generality of men dislike more than to have another man set over their heads. It is a wound to a man's vanity, for it implies that he is unequal to his work, or, at any rate, that another man can be found to do it better. More especially is it galling for a man to be superseded, publicly, by another, for then all the world knows it; and all the world, being both jealous and uncharitable, will certainly put the worst construction on the fact. There is no trial which more searchingly tests a man's sense of duty and his loyalty to his employers; and a public servant who can pass through this ordeal with sincere good grace deserves not merely respect but honour.

In the days when we were fighting Revolutionary France and Napoleon there was an officer of the Guards who had risen by steady service to the rank of a general. His name was Sir Harry Burrard and he came of a very good old Hampshire family. He was not a lucky man, for his first independent command

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—a very small one—involved him in a rather humiliating failure, which was no fault of his, but rather of the Cabinet which had sent him on an absurd and dangerous errand. In 1799 he commanded a brigade in a far more important expedition to North Holland, which, for the same reason, ended as ignominiously as the first. Then at last, in 1808, he seemed to have got his chance. Spain had revolted against Napoleon; and we sent an army under Sir Arthur Wellesley to help her. It so happened that just previously Sir John Moore had been sent to Sweden with ten thousand men to assist her, our only ally in Europe at the moment, to withstand the joint attacks of Russia, Norway, and Denmark. It was a very unwise thing to despatch the force thither at all, for if it was to be of any service, it must act in conjunction with the Swedish army under the orders of the King of Sweden, who was well known to be insane. Moore soon discovered what manner of task had been committed to him, and not relishing relations with a madman, brought his ten thousand men back to England. He was quite right; but the Ministers who had sent him on this unhappy mission were very angry indeed with him. His return from Sweden made them look like fools, and no men enjoy that, least of all when they deserve it. So they determined to make Moore feel their displeasure.

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It so happened that the ten thousand men were very welcome as an addition to Sir Arthur Wellesley's force in Portugal; and to Portugal Ministers very wisely resolved to send them. But they could hardly do so without sending Sir John Moore with them; and it happened that Sir John was not only a very competent soldier but senior to Sir Arthur Wellesley, wherefore in the ordinary course of things he would take command of Sir Arthur Wellesley's force as well as of his own, and, in fact, be Commander-in-Chief in the Peninsula. Ministers were determined to prevent this at any cost, so they appointed Sir Harry Burrard, who was senior both to Moore and Wellesley, to proceed from England to Portugal at once, in order to keep the command out of Moore's hands. Moreover, in case Burrard should not arrive in time, they appointed also Sir Hew Dalrymple, who, being Governor of Gibraltar, was near the scene of action. Dalrymple, as it happened, was senior to Burrard; so that there was a very good chance that the command of the army might change hands three times in a few days.

And this was exactly what happened. Sir Arthur Wellesley had just won a brilliant victory in Portugal and was sure of destroying the French army in that country when Sir Harry Burrard landed, and, naturally knowing nothing about the campaign, said he must wait for a

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little in order to see the situation for himself. He waited for a day, and then Sir Hew Dalrymple appeared and said that he too must wait for the same reason. The result was that a great opportunity was lost and that the French army, instead of being captured and sent prisoners to England, was shipped off to France with full liberty to fight again. The Ministers were furious; but, though they had only themselves to thank, they hesitated for some time whether they should lay the blame on Wellesley, on Burrard, or on Dalrymple. In the end, they made a scape-goat of Dalrymple.

Meanwhile Burrard was left in command in Portugal; and, as it was certain that the Ministers intended to continue the operations in the Peninsula, he made all his arrangements for advancing into Spain with twenty thousand men. He had hardly done so when he was informed that he was to transfer the command of these troops to Moore, that Moore with an army increased to forty thousand men was to conduct the operations in Spain, and that Burrard himself was to remain in Portugal in control of the few troops that were to be left there. Considering that Burrard had been ostentatiously appointed only three months before to take command over the head of Moore, it was rather a curious proceeding to appoint Moore to take command over the head of

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Burrard. Had Burrard been an ordinary man, it was reasonable to expect that he would quarrel either with the Ministers, who had treated him in this astonishing fashion, or with Moore, or with both. There were many contributory causes why he should fall at variance with Moore, apart from the action of Ministers. In the first place, he was an Englishman and Moore was a Scot; and in the second place, he was a guardsman and Moore a linesman, and there was a good deal of jealousy in those days, not without reason, between officers of the Guards and of the Line. In fact, if ever there were two generals who had good excuse for hating each other and for doing all that they could to thwart each other, they were Burrard and Moore in Portugal in October 1808.

But petty squabbles over points of personal dignity were utterly foreign to the characters of both men. Burrard knew perfectly well that Moore was an abler man than himself and that Ministers were right, in the public interest, to displace him in favour of Moore. Why should he take offence because Ministers, in doing what was plainly their duty, caused a little unpleasantness to him? He accepted their decision not merely with prompt obedience but with joy. "Happy shall I be," he wrote to them, "if in anything I can serve an officer whose whole soul is in the service, and for whose character

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and abilities I have the highest respect." And he added in a private letter, "I assure you that the appointment of Moore to command the force in Spain is most acceptable to my feelings, for, if I am not blinded or rendered partial by friendship, I can safely say that I do not know so capable an officer to command an army." He knew that Ministers honestly regretted to have hurt his feelings, and therefore he hastened to set their minds at rest.

And these were not mere words. Many a man in Burrard's place would have conjured up unlikely or imaginary dangers to prove that he could not safely hold his position without at least a few good troops and the means of moving them, and would have made difficulties about yielding up anything. But Burrard thought only of his country and of Moore. He knew that Moore's task must be hard and might be dangerous, and he not only offered to him but pressed upon him everything of the best that he had. It never occurred to him that he could do any less; but it did occur to Moore, who had not always met with such generous treatment, and who took care that Ministers should know it. "Sir Harry Burrard," he wrote to them, "seems on this occasion to put himself aside and to give everything to me and to the service he thinks most important, with as much liberality as if he himself were

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personally concerned in it." There was only one way in which he could show his gratitude by deeds as well as by words to Burrard, and he eagerly took it. Burrard's son, Ensign Harry Burrard of the First Guards, had joined Moore's army with his regiment. Moore took him upon his staff as aide-de-camp, so that the young fellow might have some opportunity of distinguishing himself and could be brought forward, if he did well, in public despatches. So Sir John Moore rode away into Spain with young Harry trotting proudly behind him; and old Harry Burrard, as we may guess, rode some little way with them, watched them out of sight, and returned sadly, wondering when he would see them again.

Moore's orders were to act in conjunction with the Spanish armies; but, long before he could reach them, those armies had been beaten and dispersed in all directions. Napoleon had one hundred and eighty thousand men in Spain. Moore had forty thousand. To think of meeting Napoleon in the field was out of the question; but by threatening the road that led from France into Spain—the road by which all Napoleon's reinforcements of men, arms, and munitions must travel—he might be able to dislocate Napoleon's plans and gain time for the Spaniards to recover themselves. It was a most difficult and dangerous enterprise, for Moore must advance far enough

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to alarm Napoleon, yet not too far; and at the right moment he must "run for it," as he said, to his ships on the coast, and escape before Napoleon's superior forces could overtake and annihilate him.

He succeeded perfectly; but his army had a terrible retreat through the snow of the Galician mountains, and many of his regiments made it much worse than it need have been through their indiscipline. Had his troops been of the quality of those that made the retreat from Mons, the story would have been different; but Mr Pitt and his first successors had for years made a dreadful mess of the Army; and, though it was improving, it was not yet all that it ought to be. The men, too, had some cause for discontent. For years Ministers had been sending troops on different enterprises to various places, and almost always with the same result—that after a short advance and perhaps an action or two of doubtful success, the venture was found to be impossible, and it was necessary to retreat, re-embark, and sail back to England. Moore's men, having advanced for three hundred miles into the heart of Spain, flattered themselves that for once the old story was not to be repeated, and they became very sullen and savage when they found out that, instead of fighting, they must turn their backs and retrace three hundred miles to the coast.

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At last they came down from the bleak, bitter mountains into the sunny plains, and Moore drew up by the wayside to watch them pass. A very sorry disorderly mob many of them were, filthily dirty, and unkempt, with clothes in tatters and often no boots at all, streaming sulkily on like a gang of ruffians from a race-course on a wet day. But presently Moore heard the tap of a drum, and his face brightened up. "Those must be the Guards," he said; and presently the two battalions of the First Guards, each of them still eight hundred strong, strode by in column of sections, as filthy and mud-stained and ragged as the rest, but always disciplined soldiers. The drums were beating, the drum-major was twirling his staff, the men were keeping step as if they had been marching from Whitehall to St James's instead of ending a weary tramp of eighteen days through mud and snow. We may guess how proud young Harry Burrard must have felt of his regiment.

Moore had hoped to ship his army at Coruña without further trouble, but the transports had been delayed by contrary winds; and he found himself compelled to fight the French, whom the delay had enabled to overtake him, in order to secure his embarkation. It so happened that a part of the battlefield was broken up by enclosures; and in order to be able to reach any part of it, it was necessary for Moore and other

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of the higher officers to return constantly to a certain point where four roads met. The French quickly discovered this and turned their batteries upon the cross-roads. The first general to fall was Sir David Baird, who was carried to the rear with his left arm badly shattered close to the shoulder. The surgeons decided that the arm must be taken out of the socket, and Baird sat down on a chair, leaning his head upon his right hand, and bade them do their work at once. You may imagine that in the days before anæsthetics were known, a man would be glad to get through the operation and have done with it. But, while the surgeons were in the middle of it, news came that Sir John Moore had been severely wounded, and Baird ordered the surgeons to leave him alone and go at once to tend Sir John. Baird was a dour, hard Scot, whose temper, never of the sweetest, had been embittered by cruel hardship while a wounded prisoner of war in the hands of Tippoo Sahib in India; but he never thought of his own hurts when he heard that his chief was injured also.

Moore had been struck on the shoulder by a round-shot, which hurled him violently from his saddle to the ground. He sat up immediately and continued to watch the battle, speaking with a voice so strong and bearing a face so totally unmoved that one of his staff, who stood close

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to him, thought that the General was unhurt, until he saw that his left arm was almost severed from his body. With his own consent Moore was carried to the rear, meeting on the way the two surgeons sent to him by Baird. He sent them back to Sir David at once, for he knew that his own wound was mortal. The left shoulder was shattered to fragments; the left arm was hanging by a film of skin; two ribs on the left side were broken and bared of flesh, which had been torn into strips by the passage of the shot and, flying back, had tied themselves into knots. The ball must have passed across him after striking the shoulder, for the right side of his body was also frightfully bruised, and the lungs were injured by the shock. He was laid on a mattress, where Colonel Anderson, one of his oldest friends, supported his head; and there he waited calmly for the end. "I feel myself so strong," he said, "I fear I shall be long dying—it is great uneasiness—it is great pain." But though in extremity of anguish, he uttered no moan nor complaint, nay, he would not allow even his face to betray suffering; and his features retained their expression of dignified serenity. The action came to an end at nightfall and one by one his staff came in to see him, among them Colonel George Murray, who was later to be Wellington's chief staff-officer, and Major John Colborne, one day to become Lord Seaton, the

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greatest of Wellington's pupils. As each came in, he asked anxiously if all of his aide-de-camps were safe, and each at a signal from Anderson, answered that they were. Presently two of the aide-de-camps appeared, and he greeted them with a kind word; but there were yet two more, George Napier and Harry Burrard, who had not presented themselves, and again he asked eagerly if they were safe. For the second time Anderson raised his hand, and the answer was given that all were well. Moore whispered with difficulty a few kindly messages; and then came the last silence. There was no distorted countenance, no sign of anguish. He had triumphed over pain and lay calm and peaceful at rest.

One of the missing aide-de-camps came in soon after Moore had breathed his last; but the other came not at all, for young Harry Burrard also had been mortally wounded and lay dead not far away. Anderson and the rest knew it, but had shrunk from distressing their dying chief with news so mournful. It seemed as though the beautiful unselfishness of all the actors in this drama was to recoil upon their own heads. Baird did, indeed, recover, but this was his last campaign. John Moore was dead. Harry Burrard had lost both his son and his friend. And yet these sacrifices were not made for naught. Moore's advance into Spain dislocated Napoleon's plans not for the moment

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only but radically and permanently; and thus Arthur Wellesley, who returned to take Moore's place, was able to continue with indomitable patience and tenacity the long struggle which ended in the expulsion of the French from Spain, the invasion of France, and the fall of Napoleon. Moore had profited by the unselfishness of Burrard; England had profited by the devotion of Moore. That was enough. Neither Moore nor Burrard asked for more.

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VII

SOLDIERS AT SEA

We live on an island and unless we choose to fight each other, which we have not done for nearly three centuries, or are invaded by an enemy in force, which has not happened for nearly nine centuries, we have to seek our foes across the sea. For this reason no army has so great experience of the sea as the British. Throughout the eighteenth century, moreover, the first duty of the King's army was to man the King's fleet; and very good service it has done there. But I mean to speak here not of the doings of soldiers on board the King's ships but of some of their adventures on the hired merchant-ships—transports as they are called—whereon they have been carried all over the world to fight their country's battles. Unfortunately, unless something extraordinary has happened, soldiers say nothing about their voyages. They take them as all in the day's work, and unworthy of further notice. And yet in the old days of sailing ships they must have had a miserable time, packed tight in small

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vessels with little room to move, and very strictly limited in their allowance of water, to say nothing of the ordinary perils of the sea. A heavy gale, too, might carry transports to most unexpected places. In the course of the American War troops were embarked at New York for Charleston, South Carolina, a voyage of about seven hundred miles southward. A storm came on. The transports were dispersed in all directions; and two of them were blown across the Atlantic, three thousand miles to west. One of them came safely into Falmouth in Cornwall. The other was blown through the straits of Gibraltar and brought up at Carthagena, on the east coast of Spain, actually falling to pieces. They passed her cables round her and hove them taut with the capstan—frapped her is the nautical word—to hold her together, and thus she managed to hobble into Gibraltar, where she did fall to pieces. Look at your map, and think what it must have meant to be driven thus at the mercy of the wind, with a good chance of going to the bottom at any moment.

Another trouble was that the skippers of the transports were often extremely ignorant and careless, and very hazy in their ideas of navigation. Sir Harry Smith tells us that on his voyage from Halifax to Jamaica, the captain would leave his quadrant about on deck in the most casual fashion, and that he, Sir Harry,

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watched over it most jealously knowing that, without it, there was no guide across the ocean. An old general, whose private secretary I was forty years ago, told me that he was shipped off in the year 1840 from England to Cape Town in a hired transport, being then a subaltern who had just joined the Royal Engineers. Less than a week after starting, the captain and the mate had a fight, and in the course of the struggle the captain's sextant—the only one on the ship—went overboard. Luckily the young engineer had with him a quadrant, and with that the captain navigated his ship to Cape Town; but the voyage took one hundred and forty days—twenty mortal weeks to cover a distance which nowadays is traversed in little more than two. But this is not the longest voyage of a transport that is on record, for there was one which took one hundred and eighty days to carry the Seventeenth Light Dragoons home from Buenos Ayres; and, if you measure off the distances on your map, you will find that Buenos Ayres is not so far away as the Cape.

While we were fighting the French in the West Indies at the very end of the eighteenth century, a transport started from thence homeward bound. At the end of a few days the skipper died of excessive drinking, and the mate did not know how to navigate the ship; so a major of infantry took charge of her and undertook to

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bring her across the Atlantic to the mouth of the Thames. The major took her safely over the ocean, guided her into an estuary, and looked round for applause. But, on making inquiry, he found that he was not in the Thames at all, but in the Mersey. Without knowing it, he had passed round the north of Ireland instead of round the south of it, having miscalculated his position by about four hundred miles. However, he brought the ship home safe enough, which was the great point; and perhaps it was as well that he made a mistake of four hundred miles instead of two hundred, otherwise he might have wrecked her on the Irish coast. Numbers of transports were wrecked in old days, some of which were known to have perished, while others were never heard of again. However, I have said enough to show that a voyage in a transport less than a hundred years ago was a far more hazardous adventure than we now can dream of.

But there have been certain disasters to transports at sea which are deservedly famous in the annals of the Army and will never be forgotten. During the late war with Germany ships were torpedoed and sunk by the score, and never did we hear of any panic or timid behaviour in men or women. I had the honour to meet on a Cunard ship a stewardess who had been saved from three torpedoed ships, and she was carrying on her work at sea as calmly and

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happily as ever. Why do we English make it a point of honour to show coolness and courage if we are in danger on board ship? Because the Army has set us the example; and now we must see when and how. The first story is that of

The "Kent," East Indiaman

In February 1825 the Thirty-first Regiment (1st East Surreys) embarked at Gravesend for Calcutta, half of it on the East India Company's ship *Kent*, a sailing ship of 1400 tons. In all there were six hundred and thirty-seven souls aboard of her, including three hundred and sixty-four officers and men and one hundred and thirty of their wives and children. On the morning of the 7th of March she was in the Bay of Biscay labouring under a strong westerly gale with a heavy sea. Owing to this a spirit-cask in the after-hold broke adrift, and an officer of the ship went down with a patent lantern to secure it, when a heavy lurch caused him to drop the light and at the same time stove in the cask. In an instant the spirit caught fire and the after-hold was ablaze. A heavy gale is a sufficiently terrifying thing to landsmen without a fire; but there was no confusion. Captain Cobb, who was in command of the *Kent*, brought her head up to the wind, so that the fire should not be driven forward, and the soldiers, under perfect

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discipline, did their utmost to smother the flames with wet blankets, wet greatcoats, and anything else of the kind that they could lay hands on. But the whole of the spirits in the ship were swiftly kindled, and it was soon evident that she could not be saved. There was powder stowed in her forward, and, when the fire reached this, the *Kent* would be blown to pieces. There was nothing to be done but to take to the boats; and Captain Cobb consulted Colonel Fearon, the commanding officer, as to the order which should be observed in loading them. He was answered that the juniors must certainly go first, but the women and children first of all; and, to ensure that this should be done, officers took their stand over the boats with drawn swords.

Then came the business of collecting the women and children, most of them miserably seasick, all staggering with difficulty up the ladders to the deck, all drenched to the skin by the spray within five minutes, and all terrified by the sight of the raging sea all round them, and of the flames and smoke in the stern. The women would ask for their husbands and would catch sight of them black with smoke and choking with reek as they fought the fire. However, with much trouble a boat was loaded up with the poor creatures and successfully lowered by the help of skill and good fortune. But it was too much to hope for such luck with the five

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remaining boats. Three of them were stove in against the ship's side and swamped; and every soul on board of them was drowned. For four hours, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., the men strove hopelessly against the fire; and then providentially a brig, the *Cambria*, hove in sight and at once bore down to the rescue. She was only a small vessel of 200 tons, and the master, Captain Cook by name, ran great risk of losing her by standing by the *Kent* in such weather. But he did stand by her, being a gallant, skilful seaman, for five hours, and throughout the afternoon until long past sunset the boats carried load after load from the *Kent* to the *Cambria*.

But it was terribly dangerous work. The boats could not come alongside lest they should be stove in, to say nothing of the difficulty of getting into a boat even in a moderate swell. The *Kent* was rolling her yard-arms nearly into the water; and it was only possible to get the women and children out of her by lashing them together in pairs and lowering them by ropes over the stern. There the boats were tossing like corks, and it was not easy between the swinging of the ropes and the dancing of the boat to save the unfortunate people, who were being lowered down, from dipping first into the sea. Many of them, indeed, were caught by the waves again and again before the boats' crews could catch them, and were finally taken on board either drowned

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outright or half-dead from cold. Some of the husbands, watching the peril of their wives and children from the deck of the *Kent*, could hardly contain themselves. One woman fell overboard while waiting for her turn. Her husband leaped into the sea to save her, and both were drowned. Their three little children wandered away, having no one to look after them, and, it is supposed, hid themselves away in some cabin, for they were never seen again. Another woman, seized with panic, took refuge with her children in a cabin on the first alarm, and was there caught by the smoke and stifled with them before she could escape. There was enormous difficulty in ascertaining whether all the children were present, and some evidently were found after their mothers had left the ship, for certain of the soldiers took them on their backs, jumped into the sea and swam with them to the boats. But it was a long and dreary afternoon's work, for every journey of the boats from ship to ship took three-quarters of an hour; and there was as much difficulty and danger in taking the rescued on board the *Cambria* as in taking them off the *Kent*. Many in fact were washed away and drowned or crushed to death by wreckage. There were many forms of death on that terrible day.

By eight o'clock in the evening the fire had gained so fierce a hold of the *Kent* that it was

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dangerous for the *Cambria* to stand by her longer, lest she too should be destroyed when the fire reached the *Kent's* powder-magazines. There were then, so far as was known, only twenty men left on the *Kent*, who had huddled themselves together on the poop, and, utterly unnerved and exhausted, would make no attempt to save themselves. So last of all Captain Cobb and Colonel Fearon left the doomed ship, having done all that they could, and reached the *Cambria* in safety. Very soon the *Kent* was one sheet of flame from stem to stern, and for four hours she burned furiously until at length she blew up and was seen no more. The *Cambria* then made her way to Falmouth, filled to bursting with five hundred and fifty-three men, women, and children besides her own crew and passengers, and dangerously low in the water. She reached port safely, however, after three days, in the course of which the number of the rescued was increased by one, for a baby was born to one of the soldiers' wives; and mother and child did well.

In all there were lost fifty-four soldiers, one woman, and twenty-one children. Most of these might perhaps have been saved had the crew of the *Kent* followed the noble example of their captain and officers. But unfortunately they did not. After bringing the first boat-loads from the *Kent* to the *Cambria* they refused

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to return to the burning ship. Then Captain Cook took them in hand and told them flatly that, unless they went on with the work of rescue, he would refuse to receive them on board his ship. Then they decided to do what they were told, though very reluctantly. It is not often that British seamen behave so ill; and it is probable that the troops let them know later on what they thought of them. If the discipline of the soldiers had not been so perfect there would have been panic and confusion, and not a soul, except possibly these rascally sailors of the crew, would have been saved, for every man would have looked to himself, and the seamen, knowing the ways of a ship, would have had the best chance. But, as things were, the loss of life was due to the heavy sea that was running at the time of the disaster, for, with such discipline, every soul would have been saved had the weather been calm. The behaviour of the troops was not overlooked, for the Duke of York, who was then Commander-in-Chief, wrote to Colonel Fearon warmly commending the "united courage and discipline" of his officers and men; and the King conferred on him the Companionship of the Bath.

Thus was the half of a noble battalion saved to the country by its own good soldiership. They were sent out to India later in the year by another vessel, and they were still there in 1846

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when the first Sikh war broke out. I wish that I could tell you how they covered themselves with glory at Mudki, Ferozeshah, Aliwal, and Sobraon, but you can read of that in other books, where you will find no account of their conduct on board the *Kent*, which to my mind is the finest of all.

The Story of the "Sarah Sands"

It was the year 1857. The Indian Mutiny was in full blast; and the East India Company was hiring transports in all directions to carry reinforcements to India. Among other vessels they took up the iron screw-steamer *Sarah Sands*, of 1100 tons burden. In these days when giant liners measure as much as 40,000 or 50,000 tons, she would be considered as no better than a third-rate "tramp," but in 1857 she was respectable, and, being built all of iron, was quite in the newest fashion. But the earlier steamships, when marine engines had not yet been brought to their present perfection, were, to say the least of it, uncertain. Now there was a time when the Royal Navy kept a certain number of ships for the sole purpose of transporting troops over the sea. Some of them were good ships, but some were bad; and about the worst of them was the *Megæra*, which some fifty years ago was run ashore on St

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Paul's Island to prevent her from sinking. The *Megæra* was employed to take a battalion of the Rifle Brigade out to the Cape in 1852. She started from the Downs on the 3rd of January, met a gale off Beachy Head, suffered much damage, caught fire twice, and on the 5th put back into Plymouth utterly disabled. She was hurriedly repaired and on the 7th put to sea again, for news had arrived of a mishap in South Africa, and she took close upon two months to reach Cape Town, having caught fire more than once upon the way. That is a specimen of what went on in the days when steamships were still young. The *Sarah Sands*, as you will see, was one of the same kind as the *Megæra*.

She sailed from Portsmouth on the 15th of August 1857, having on board the head-quarters of the Fifty-fourth Regiment (now the second battalion of the Dorsets), about four hundred strong. The crew consisted mainly of "dagos"—foreigners,—for there had been such a demand for seamen to man transports proceeding to India that no better men could be obtained. This was a bad beginning, for these dagos were a sullen, careless, useless lot of men who gave much trouble to the ship's officers from the first. The voyage also was unfavourable, for the ship took more than two months to reach Cape Town. There she stayed for some days to coal, and then again

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put to sea, all hoping for a quick passage across the Indian Ocean. At seven o'clock on the evening of the 11th of November, when she was a thousand miles away from any land, there was an alarm of fire in the after-hold; and, when the hatchways were taken off to examine the mischief, the materials smouldering below burst into a blaze, with such dense volumes of smoke as to suffocate any man who went near it. One boat was lowered to hold five ladies, wives of officers, who were on board; and the dagos seized the rest of them, lowered them, and made off. The cowardly hounds can have lost no time in making their escape, for, when the captain gave orders to take in all sail and bring the ship's head up to the wind, there were not sailors enough left on board to do the work, which was only accomplished with the help of the soldiers. These had come up and fallen in on deck in perfect silence and order, and were soon busy under the direction of their officers. Lengths of hose were fitted on to the fire-engine to play on the flames, but the water produced no appreciable effect; and very soon it was plain that the regiment must fight the fire for its life.

The first thought was for the colours; and almost simultaneously Private William Willes and a quartermaster of the ship's company dashed through blinding smoke into the saloon where

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the colours were lodged. Presently they came staggering out, carrying the precious silk, waved the staves feebly and then collapsed, more dead than alive through suffocation. The next urgent matter was to get rid of the ammunition, which was stowed aft in two magazines, one on either side of the ship. The starboard magazine was successfully cleared by the soldiers; but the access to the port magazine was closed by volumes of hot, suffocating smoke. Major Hughes led the way to it, and the soldiers followed him. He himself passed up the first cask of ammunition, and his men passed up more. Several of them were brought up to the deck senseless, but others took their place, and the work went on. At last only one cask of ammunition was left, and a soldier was actually heaving it up when he fainted, and was brought up senseless. The fire had gained such a hold by this time that it was hopeless to think of reaching this cask; and now it was remembered that two barrels of powder, stored in the ship for signalling purposes, were also down below without possibility of reaching them. An explosion might, therefore, take place at any moment; and then probably the ship would go down.

This made no difference whatever to the order and discipline of the men, who worked on, obeying every command without the slightest

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hesitation. They were formed up in column of sections, the foremost deluging the hold with water from fire-hose and buckets until they could face the heat and smoke no longer, when they were hauled up with ropes, and replaced by those next behind them, until all had taken their turn. Meanwhile as each group of men recovered from the fight with the fire, they fell in to rear of the column until their turn should come again. In spite of all their exertions the fire at about nine o'clock blazed through the main deck; the flames quickly licked up the rigging of the mizzen-mast, and presently the mast fell with a crash and lay in the water alongside. This caused the ship's head to fall away from the wind. The breeze began to drive the fire forward from the stern, and her destruction appeared inevitable, when a man ran along the bulwarks with a hatchet, cut the mast clear, and enabled the ship's head to be brought up again into the wind.

Thus one great danger was averted; and meanwhile some of the men had been employed in the hasty construction of rafts against the moment when the explosion of the powder should sink the ship. Two of these rafts were afloat and a third was on deck when the fire at last gained the better of the water which had been unceasingly poured into the magazine; and then there was a roar and a concussion which shook the vessel from

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stem to stern. The remnants of the stern cabin went flying into the air; the port quarter of the ship was blown out, leaving a big hole open to the sea; the whole stern of the vessel dipped under water, and everyone thought that she was gone. But not a man moved one step towards the rafts. Not a man stirred except by his officer's order. The *Sarah Sands* righted herself; and the fight went on.

All through the night the struggle continued. The flames gave plenty of light and the sea was reddened for miles around by the glare, showing a vast shoal of sharks all round the ship. Fortunately she was divided into three compartments by iron bulkheads. The aftermost of the three was already burned out, but, if the fire were stopped at the bulkhead which shut it off from the rest of the ship, then the *Sarah Sands* might be saved. The Fifty-fourth vowed in their hearts that it should not pass beyond the bulkhead. For hour after hour they deluged the after-compartment and the bulkhead itself with water from hose and buckets. The sides of the ship became red-hot. The soldiers cared not, but worked on. Man after man was carried forward insensible through heat and smoke, and left there to revive while other men took their place. The night wore on, and the day dawned. The fire was still held at bay; and at last, at nine o'clock in the morning, after fourteen

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hours of desperate contest, it was observed that smoke in the after-compartment was giving place to steam. Water was getting the better of fire, and the victory was nearly won. Four more hours of hard work, and the fire was finally beaten. At noon of the 12th of March the ladies were taken on board again, and the captain allowed the "dagos" also to return, though he told them, plainly and rightly, that they deserved to be left adrift. I conjecture that they did not enjoy themselves when they found themselves among the soldiers again.

But, though the fire had been extinguished, the danger of the *Sarah Sands* was as great as ever. The after-compartment was a mere shell of iron, traversed by a confusion of buckled iron girders, with a huge gap in the port quarter where the barrels of powder had exploded. It was nearly twenty feet deep in water, in which the ship's tanks floated from side to side, threatening to knock out the iron plates with every roll of the vessel. The steering-gear, except the rudder and tiller, was destroyed. The captain, though he had saved charts and compass, had been unable to bring away his chronometers, so that it was impossible to determine accurately the position of the ship. The ship's provisions, excepting one barrel of rum, one or two of flour, and one or two of salt beef, had all been burned. The condensers, for producing fresh

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water, had been so much damaged that they could turn out only a small supply, which was hardly drinkable. The whole of the stern cabins had, of course, been burned out, so that much shelter had been lost, and, as one-third of the ship was useless, everyone had to be crowded forward into two-thirds of the space originally intended for them. Lastly, everyone was utterly exhausted and sick. The heat had been so intense that the clothes of officers and men had been baked almost into dry dust, and almost fell to pieces with the mere strain of taking them off or putting them on; and the fumes that had been generated during the fire were charged with poisonous gases. To all intent the soldiers and those of the ship's company who worked with them had been facing an attack of poisoned gas without masks for fourteen hours. Never had man a more desperate task before him than the captain of the *Sarah Sands* at noon of the 12th of March 1857.

However, he faced it like a man. The first thing was to secure the floating tanks; the next was to pass two chains round the stern and heave them taut to keep it together; the next to stop the leak with canvas and to pump the water out of the stern. Then ropes were made fast to the tiller, and wooden platforms were rigged up for six men on either side to pull the ropes and so move the tiller to port or starboard.

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All this took three days; and then at last it was possible to think of making for port. In the weakened state of the stern the captain dared not use the engines, but steamers were fully rigged with masts and sails in those days, and so he made sail for Mauritius. For nearly a fortnight the voyage lasted, during which all on board suffered greatly from the discomforts of overcrowding, want of food, and want of water, the monotony being varied only by the occasional breaking of a sea into the gutted stern, and the prospect, if the weather should turn really foul, of the vessel foundering and going to the bottom. The captain, having no chronometers, had to rely on the watches of his passengers to work out his position on the sea at every noon; but his seaman's instinct guided him aright, and at length, at four in the afternoon, Mauritius was sighted. Then, after the stern had been further strengthened by ropes, he thought that he might venture to use the engine; and with the screw revolving very slowly he crept in towards the land. Darkness fell before he could make Port Louis, and the ship was very nearly driven ashore while beating off the coast during the night. But when the light came the *Sarah Sands* crawled safely into port, as lame a duck as ever entered haven, without the loss of a single life.

In those days it took long for letters to reach

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England from Mauritius, and it was not until the following year that the story of the *Sarah Sands* was known at home. Then, on the 27th of February 1858, the Commander-in-Chief issued a General Order, holding up the conduct of the Fifty-fourth to the admiration of the whole Army, and mentioning in particular the names of four officers and twenty-six non-commissioned officers and men. Coolness, courage, and discipline were the qualities which he singled out for praise; and I know no finer example of all three in the history of the Army. The troubles of the regiment at sea were not ended at Mauritius, for the ship which ultimately took them to India ran into a typhoon in the Indian Ocean; her captain died of exposure and anxiety when the storm was safely over; and when she at last entered the Hooghly she was disabled by a bad accident to the engines; but these must have seemed trifles after the experience of the *Sarah Sands*. Remember her story if ever you see the Second Dorsets, and take off your hats to the battalion which inherits so noble a tradition.

THE "BIRKENHEAD"

In January 1852 the *Birkenhead*, troopship, an iron paddle-wheel steamer, sailed from Cork with drafts to fill the ranks of the regiments

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with which Sir Harry Smith was fighting the Kaffirs in Cape Colony. There were nine of these regiments in all, and the drafts numbered close upon five hundred officers and men, the greatest number belonging to any one regiment being seventy-four and the least fifteen. The voyage to the Cape was without incident; a few sick men and soldiers' wives and children were landed, and on the 25th of February the *Birkenhead* sailed again for Port Elizabeth, having now on board thirteen officers, four hundred and seventy-five soldiers, thirty women and children, and a ship's company of one hundred and thirty, including marines, in all six hundred and thirty-eight souls. She was commanded by Captain Robert Salmond; and the senior military officer was Colonel Seton of the Seventy-fourth Highland Light Infantry.

As Sir Harry Smith was anxiously awaiting the arrival of these reinforcements, the ship stood close in shore in order to shorten the passage as far as possible; and she was travelling at about eight knots in fine weather and a rolling sea when, at two o'clock in the morning, she struck an uncharted rock about two miles from shore off Danger Point. Her bottom was pierced just abaft the foremast, and the water at once rushed in with such volume that most of the men on the lower troop-deck were drowned at once in their hammocks. A few only managed

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to make their way to the deck; but in so crowded a ship in the month of February (corresponding in the Southern Hemisphere to September) at least half of the men must have been on deck in the ordinary course of things. The captain came up instantly, ordered the engines to be stopped and the boats to be lowered; and Colonel Seton, who had likewise hastened up, called the officers together, enjoined upon them the importance of silence and discipline, told off one of them to execute any orders which Captain Salmond might give, and himself took his stand at the gangway with drawn sword to check any rush to escape.

Meanwhile the men fell in upon the poop as quietly and steadily as if on parade. Many of them were raw recruits. None of them had ever seen the headquarters of their regiments, so that they had had no chance of imbibing regimental pride and regimental spirit. Most of the different batches had but one officer belonging to them, and two of them had none. Yet every man stood silent awaiting the word of command. "The order and regularity that prevailed on board," wrote Captain Wright, the senior officer who survived, "far exceeded anything that I thought could be effected by the best discipline. . . . Everyone did as he was directed. . . . All officers received their orders and had them carried out as if the men were

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embarking instead of going to the bottom. There was only this difference—that I never saw an embarkation conducted with so little noise and confusion." Parties of fifty men were told off in reliefs to man the pumps on the lower after-deck, and these marched to and from their work—for they could not stick to it for long at a time—as regularly as if they had been ashore, without a sound. There was not a murmur nor a cry. Every word of command was distinctly heard and instantly obeyed.

Meanwhile blue lights were burned as signals of distress, and the captain, in the hope of backing the ship off the reef, ordered the engines to be reversed; but she had hardly moved before she again struck; and the water then flooded the engine-room and extinguished the fires. Meanwhile there had been great difficulties in lowering the boats. One had been rendered useless by falling wreckage, no fewer than three more were unserviceable owing to defective tackle; but three were successfully launched, and the women and children, thirty in all, were first lowered into them. It was no easy task, for the ship was rolling heavily and some of the women could only by main force be torn from their husbands. A few horses that were on board were pushed into the sea by the gangway nearest the shore, as the only chance of saving them and lightening the ship. It was less than

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fifteen minutes after the ship had first struck when the boats pulled clear of her. Perfect order was still maintained. One large party of men was struggling with the refractory tackle of the larger boats; a relief had just made its way down to the pumps; and the remainder of the soldiers were standing quietly in their ranks on deck.

Then suddenly with a roar of rending iron the *Birkenhead* broke in twain. The fore part, covered with men, reared up, plunged down, and sank like a stone. The funnel fell with a crash upon the men who were wrestling with the tackle of the boats, crushing the life out of some and grievously maiming others. Those that were unhurt rushed aft, for the water flooded into the rent, and the *Birkenhead's* stern was tilting higher and higher into the air. The last batch of men at the pumps was overwhelmed by the inflow before they could escape, and the men with their officers died at their posts. The end was very near, and Captain Salmond gave the word, "All those that can swim jump overboard and make for the boats." It was the signal that discipline was now relaxed and that every man might shift for himself. But the boats numbered only three and must inevitably have been swamped by the crowd of swimming men trying to climb into them; and Colonel Seton, Captain Wright of the Ninety-first, and

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Lieutenant Girardot of the Forty-third, turning to the men implored them to stay in their ranks rather than imperil the safety of the women and children. It was an entreaty, not a command. Three men only leaped into the water. The remainder stood fast by their officers.

The stern was now rapidly settling down, and the water round it was full of struggling, drowning men, a deadly peril to any swimmer who ventured among them. A little group of officers seems to have gathered round Seton and Salmond by the stern-rails. One of them, Ensign Lucas, hearing his name called, looked round and saw his soldier-servant, who asked for his orders whether he should follow him or not. The man could not swim, though Lucas could; but it did not occur to him to look to his own safety without his master's leave. Lucas bade him climb as high as possible into the rigging; but he never saw his faithful servant again. Presently the stern sank, less than twenty-five minutes after the ship had first struck. The main-topmast was still above water with some fifty men clinging to it; but that was all that was left of the *Birkenhead*.

The scene now was very terrible. Hundreds of men were struggling for life, some holding on to wreckage, others floundering as best they could with wild cries, for a swarm of sharks had gathered round the wreck and dragged

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down victim after victim. Girardot, who had remained on the stern until the last possible moment, took a prodigious header in order to escape being sucked down, but was dragged far into the depths by a drowning man before he could extricate himself. Wright found a group of spars on which five other men were already lying, and succeeded in picking up nine or ten more. But they could only remain stationary until daylight, for they had lost all their bearings, and, being unable to see the shore, knew not in which direction it might lie. The night was cold, and the men succumbed by scores to exhaustion and sank. When the light came, the officers resumed charge of the survivors, and as best they could propelled the wreckage to which they clung towards the shore; but here fresh peril awaited them, for the coast was rocky and lined with kelp weed, which, entangling men and dragging them under, was hardly less deadly than the sharks. Wright, as his party drifted into the breakers, swam off ahead of the rest, and was ready to help every man ashore and save them from the back-draught of the under-tow. Having collected them all, he led them (for he happened to know the country) to the house of a retired English officer, left them in his charge, and himself returned at once to look for more survivors.

Girardot, reaching the surf alone, happened

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there upon four or five men upon a cluster of spars, and with them drifted by good fortune within a hundred yards of the beach. All swam ashore save one, who could not swim, whereupon Girardot, though he had been for ten hours in the water and was wellnigh exhausted, bade the man rest his hands on his own shoulders and so brought him safely in. Among his companions was an officer of the Twelfth Lancers, who, on landing, heard the neigh of a horse and recognised his own charger which had swum ashore many hours before him. Girardot and his people found their way to the same refuge as Wright's men; and Girardot and Wright, meeting later on the beach, scoured the coast for the next few days in a small boat and picked up one or two more survivors. But the whole number that thus reached the shore did not exceed sixty-eight. Of all that were on board the *Birkenhead* one hundred and ninety-three only, including all the women and children, were saved, while four hundred and forty-five perished. Both of the commanding officers, Captain Salmond and Colonel Seton, were numbered among the dead.

The regiments whose drafts were on board the *Birkenhead* were the Twelfth Lancers, the Second (Queen's), the Sixth (Warwicks), the Twelfth (Suffolks), the Forty-third (2nd Oxfordshire Light Infantry), the Sixtieth (King's Royal

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Rifle Corps), the Seventy-third (2nd Royal Highlanders), the Seventy-fourth (2nd Highland Light Infantry), and the Ninety-first (1st Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders). The men, it must be repeated, were raw recruits for the most part, which makes their behaviour the more wonderful. In the last speech which he ever made in public, at the Royal Academy dinner of 1852, the old Duke of Wellington spoke of it with unstinted praise, saying nothing of their courage, but much of their discipline. It was as an example of transcendent discipline, likewise, that the King of Prussia caused the story of the *Birkenhead* to be read at the head of every regiment in his army. Certainly nothing could surpass the order and obedience both of officers and men. But the supreme sacrifice was made in answer to an appeal and not to a command; and though there was indeed something of discipline in this, there was even more of that close tie between officers and men which is the peculiar distinction of the British Army. It was the naval commander who gave the word, "Every man for himself," as was his right, for he was in supreme control on board ship. But it was the military officers who said to their men, "If we try to save ourselves we shall only be the death of others. We mean to stay here and die if need be. Will you stay with us?" And the men stayed. Seton, who could not

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swim, was drowned. Wright and Girardot, who could swim, survived; but their first thought, both when adrift in the ocean and upon reaching the shore, was not for themselves but for their men. If there be one thing which the story of the *Birkenhead* illustrates more strongly than another it is the mutual trust that binds together the British soldier and his officer. There is a regiment, raised by the officer who brought back the despatches of the Battle of Quebec, which bore a black line on its appointments as mourning for the death of Wolfe. I have often wished that some such distinction were borne by the regiments that were on the *Birkenhead*, so that, when we meet them, we might silently salute the memory of their dead.

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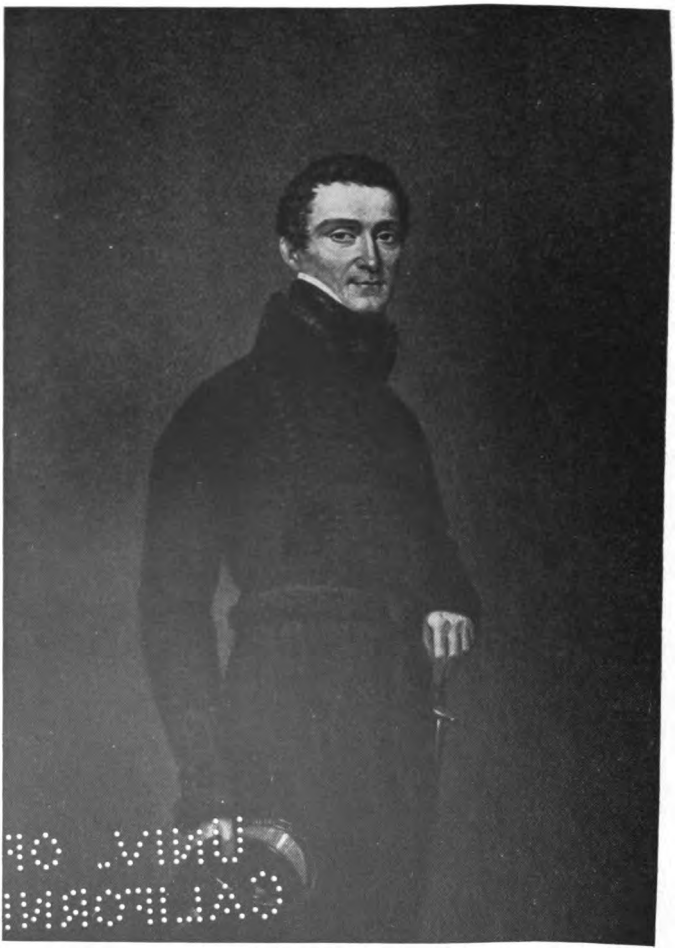

SIR HARRY SMITH

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VIII

SIR HARRY SMITH

No officer in the British Army has so wonderful a record of foreign service as Sir Harry Smith. He was the son of a Cambridgeshire parson—one of eleven children—and obtained a commission in the old Ninety-fifth, now called the Rifle Brigade, in 1805. In the following year, 1806, he sailed with his regiment to the River Plate, took part in the storm of Monte Video and Buenos Ayres in 1807, and was very nearly wrecked off the Cornish coast on his voyage home. In 1808 he went with his regiment to Sweden with Sir John Moore, then to Spain, where he shared in Moore's advance and his retreat, and the Battle of Coruña. Such was the haste of the retreat and the embarkation that he hardly took off his clothes for three weeks, and arrived home unwashed and filthy, with all the stains of the campaign upon him. For you must remember that there was no water to spare for washing on board ship in those days, and not a very great allowance even for drinking.

He had not been at home five months before

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his regiment was ordered off to the Peninsula again, and there he remained until the war ended in 1814, being present at every one of Wellington's actions in Portugal, Spain, and France. He was wounded by a bullet in the ankle-joint at the combat of the Coa in 1810, but went back to duty as aide-de-camp before the wound was healed, for he could still ride though he could hardly walk. At last one day a surgeon advised that the bullet should be taken out. "I cocked up my leg," he tells us, "and said, 'There it is; slash away'"; and in five minutes, between cutting and hauling with forceps, the bullet was pulled out, and very soon his leg was sound again. That was the spirit in which our soldiers faced a surgical operation in the days before chloroform, enduring most horrible torture without a groan.

He was never again touched; and two years after this, at the storm of Badajoz, of all places, he found a wife. The men passed out of all control after the capture of Badajoz, and only with great difficulty could the officers succeed in protecting a beautiful Spanish girl, whom two of them escorted with drawn swords into the English camp. She was barely fourteen, but a Spanish girl of fourteen is more like an English girl of eighteen. Every subaltern in the Rifle Brigade wanted to marry her; but Harry Smith carried her off, and she followed him,

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frequently under fire, through the rest of the war, and afterwards all over the world.

No sooner was peace with France concluded in 1814 than Harry Smith sailed across the Atlantic to fight the Americans, who had declared war against us in the hope of taking Canada from us while we were putting forth all our strength against Napoleon. He was present at the action of Bladensburg and the capture of Washington, returned home with despatches, crossed the Atlantic again, took a prominent part in the abortive attack upon New Orleans, where we were badly defeated, and crossing the Atlantic for the fifth time, returned to Europe just in time for the Battle of Waterloo. The next ten years were of peace-service in France and at home, and in 1825 he went with his regiment to Halifax, Nova Scotia, whence he was moved to Jamaica. His service from henceforth was all on the staff; and in Jamaica his principal business was to fight the yellow fever, which was killing the troops by hundreds. In these days yellow fever has been almost stamped out in the West Indies, but a century ago its ravages were terrible, particularly in Jamaica, where the soldier was abominably housed. The symptoms, when the disease took a bad turn, were very horrible, and this caused terror and panic. All ranks were inclined to give themselves up to despair, and then it was

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everything if some officer in high station showed courage and cheerfulness and kept up the spirit of the troops. And this Harry Smith did. In spite of all his efforts nearly seven hundred men out of three thousand were buried in six weeks; but, though no doctor, he saved many lives by using plain common sense and heartening the patients by continual visits to the hospitals. I have been on a West Indian island just when an epidemic of yellow fever was dying out, and shall never forget the gloom which overspread it and the abject terror which was displayed by many who should have known better. This gloom and terror were the most formidable enemies that Harry Smith ever had to fight, and he could only meet them by himself taking dangerous risks—by travelling long distances in the saddle or by boat under the full heat of the tropical sun in order to inspire a good heart both among the healthy and the sick. No doubt the doctors warned him that this was the best way that he could think of to catch yellow fever himself; but he never caught it. Nor did it occur to him to care whether he caught it or not so long as he did his duty.

So far he had served in South America, North America, the Peninsula, France, Belgium, Nova Scotia, and the West Indies. In 1829 he was sent as staff-officer to the Cape, where in 1834 the Kaffirs broke into the frontier with fire

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and sword, murdering and devastating in all directions. There was, of course, a panic among the settlers, and Harry Smith was sent up to Grahamstown, six hundred miles from Cape Town, to organise the defences. He rode the six hundred miles in seven days, and, without waiting even for a minute's rest on his arrival, took command and set everything in order on the spot. Then for six months he was engaged in fighting with the Kaffirs, very difficult and arduous work against a wary and cunning enemy in a most difficult country of wooded valleys and rocky fastnesses. The only way in which the Kaffirs could be made to suffer was to take their cattle—their only riches—from them; and so the war resolved itself into an endless series of raids, which meant very long marches, continual skirmishes, great fatigue, and very little food. On one occasion Harry Smith, after a hard day's work, was thankful to dine off a half-gnawed bone of goat, handed to him out of a filthy haversack by a black trooper of his escort. But the work was done, and well done; and none fought better for him than the Dutch farmers—the Boers—who would follow him anywhere and were devoted to him. The nominal commander in supreme control of the operations was a fine old soldier, Sir Benjamin D'Urban, who gave his name to the capital of Natal; but the man who made the plans, worked

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out the details, led the men into action, and reduced the Kaffirs to submission was Harry Smith. At the close of the war D'Urban annexed a large slice of Kaffirland so as to avert the danger of similar Kaffir raids in the future; but the whole of his arrangements were upset by the Government at home, and South Africa has never been quiet since. We shall have more to say about this presently.

In 1840 Harry Smith left the Cape, very unhappy at the undoing of all of D'Urban's work, for he was devoted to his chief and foresaw trouble in the future. Meanwhile he had been appointed Adjutant-General in India, and therefore sailed direct to Calcutta. Once again he was unlucky on the voyage, encountering gales the whole way. One squall took the ship aback and carried away her topmasts, blowing the sails to shreds; and on the anniversary of Waterloo, the 18th of June 1840, the ship was in grave danger of foundering. He reached Calcutta safely, however, and in 1843 was called into the field for the last Mahratta war, the one-day war, as it is called, because it was ended by two decisive battles — Maharajpore and Panniar — which were both of them fought and won on the 29th of December 1843. Harry Smith was at Maharajpore with the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Hugh Gough; and just a year later he was again engaged under Sir Hugh in all the fierce

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battles of the first Sikh war. They were really hard fights, for the Sikhs took up strong entrenched positions with many more cannon of much heavier metal than the British, and it was necessary to storm these entrenchments and capture these cannon at the point of the bayonet. At Mudki, Harry Smith, who commanded a division, decided the combat in his part of the field by snatching up one of the colours of the Fiftieth (West Kents) and riding with it into the thick of the Sikh infantry—an example which carried the Fiftieth forward irresistibly to victory. At Ferozeshah, that terrible two days' battle, he again led the Fiftieth and bore down all before him; and a few weeks later, being sent with a detached force of twelve thousand men to conduct a very difficult and delicate operation, he fought a very brilliant little action at Aliwal with the greatest success. Finally, at Sobraon, the decisive battle of the campaign, Smith's division was the first to establish itself in the Sikh entrenchments; and the stubbornness with which, under his direction, they held on to the conquered ground contributed greatly to the ultimate success. In fact throughout the war Harry Smith, on his favourite black Arab, was conspicuous, and it was a marvel that he was not killed. For his services he received the Order of the Bath and became Sir Harry, and, what he valued far more, he won warm

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commendation from the Duke of Wellington himself.

He returned home after sixteen years' absence to find himself a hero, but he had not been in England for six months before he was sent off again, in December 1847, to the Cape, this time as Governor and Commander-in-Chief. He was now sixty years of age and had prospered in all his doings, his ability and courage having been seconded by good fortune. He was presently to show how he could face adversity. In the Colony he found confusion and discontent, a second Kaffir war having been for the moment ended. The Boers had migrated in thousands, and all the work which he had done in 1836 needed to be done again. Smith's activity was marvellous. He had not been at Cape Town a fortnight before he was in the saddle riding hundreds of miles to try to see everything for himself, and, above all, to endeavour to win back the Boers. They had never lost their fondness for him, but they detested the British Government, which had upset the wise arrangements of D'Urban; and they actually fought a little action against Smith at Boomplats. He settled everything finally, as he too sanguinely hoped; but there was trouble everywhere—with politicians at Cape Town and with Kaffirs on the frontier—and though he would cheerfully ride the five hundred miles from the one to the other, he

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could not be, where he was wanted, at both at the same time.

Towards the end of December 1850 a new Kaffir war broke out, and, worse than this, there was a rising of the natives within Cape Colony itself. Smith had very few troops, and not one of the Dutch settlers would come forward to help him. He himself went to the frontier, where there were twenty thousand Kaffirs in his front and endless enemies in his rear, and there he stood firm, conscious that the terror of his name alone averted the destruction of the Colony, and that a single false step might cause every black man in the Colony to turn upon the whites and annihilate them. Everything was against him. A severe drought had destroyed all forage, so that it was difficult to obtain oxen for transport, and still more difficult to feed them on the march. He had so much to do that he had to entrust such small operations as were possible for his small force to his subordinates, and, though he never blamed them, they did not always do very well. As a crowning misfortune there was a mutiny among the Cape Mounted Rifles, a trusted native corps, whose defection to the insurgent Kaffirs threatened appalling danger. Dreading the effect of it, he took the field in person, and pressed the Kaffirs so hard for a week as to scare all the heart out of them and restore the confidence of the troops and of the

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Colonists. During the operations he was everywhere—now with the infantry, now with the cavalry, now with the guns, now absolutely alone, but always in the right place; and his energy inspired his soldiers to marvellous exertions. On one very hot day the troops were on foot marching and fighting for sixteen hours with no water within reach, and in those sixteen hours they covered thirty-six miles of ground. Yet the indomitable leader who carried them through this tremendous day's work was well past sixty.

At last reinforcements reached him, and he was able to turn upon the Kaffirs in earnest. They had taken refuge in a huge mass of rugged mountains and deep valleys and forest, about ten miles long by fifteen broad, called the Amatolas, which they thought to be impregnable; but Smith harried them out of it. The troops had a terrible time. They had to force their way through a maze of rock and woodland, often broken by dangerous clefts and crevices, while the thorns and creepers tore the clothes off their backs and their way was frequently blocked by huge dead trunks of fallen trees. Probably you have never come upon a huge fallen trunk in the middle of a forest, a trunk that lies higher than a tall man's head. You cannot climb over it, for it is as slimy as an eel. You must go round it, tearing your way through the tangle of

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thorn and scrub which grows all about it; and, when you have passed round it, you wonder where you are and in which direction you wished to go, for you can see nothing. And in the Amatolas there was no saying that there might not be a Kaffir, wary as a wild cat, silent as a snake, waiting invisible within two yards of you to take your life. Then at the end of an exhausting day of this work the men often came back to bivouac in a sea of mud, with nothing but a single blanket to shelter them from the weather. And the weather was sometimes appalling—heavy rain, sometimes turning to sleet, and bitter winds from the snow-capped hills, which chilled the men to the bone. After a few hours the sun would come out, and it was unbearably hot. These soldiers must have been a curious sight. Their red coats, torn to rags in the forest, were patched with scraps of canvas, of leather, of odd pieces of cloth, of anything that they could get. Their trousers were much the same. Their uniform caps had been lost in the forest and had been replaced by straw hats, wide-awakes (the first form of the "bowler"), and soft felt hats. Their boots were in holes, and they had no socks or stockings at all. The officers were little, if at all, better off than the men; and, with long beards, they must have looked like a pack of disreputable ruffians. But they were splendid fighters in the bush,

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and were always cheerful under the leadership of Harry Smith. He could not give them shelter, but he could (though only by great exertions in so rough a country) give them plenty to eat; and he said proudly that, whatever the hardships of his troops, they had never gone hungry for a day. Harry Smith understood the British soldier.

He was in the full tide of success in the Amatolas when he received a letter from the Government through Lord Grey, who was his chief in the Cabinet, that he was recalled from his command. The Government was dissatisfied with his work. They thought that he was too slow and that he had lost too many men; and a new commander was on his way to take his place. Even at the time this was thought to be shamefully unjust treatment, for Harry Smith had not lost many men and it is not very easy to move quickly in a rough country of twice the size of the British Isles, full of rivers and mountains and forest, and without a single road or bridge. But Harry Smith was a soldier, and it is a soldier's business to obey orders cheerfully. He acknowledged the letter of recall without complaint, merely added "I thought it my duty to continue operations," and went on with the work of his campaign, bringing it to a successful conclusion. In due time his successor arrived, and Harry Smith loyally gave

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him all the help in his power. There was, in fact, nothing for his successor to do except that which Harry Smith would have done if he had been left alone, for the Kaffirs had been finally beaten, and, practically, there was no more fighting. Harry Smith, though the Government accused him of "lack of judgment and energy," had by extraordinary activity and courage averted the ruin of Cape Colony; and his reward, after forty-seven years of services without a parallel in the history of the army, was to be sent home in disgrace.

He bore no malice and never dreamed of self-pity or complaint. When he arrived in London Lord Grey asked him to dinner, and his friends wondered whether he would, or even should, accept an invitation from one who had treated him so ill. Harry Smith accepted without hesitation. "If," he said, "Lord Grey, as my superior, thought it his duty to recall me, he was right to recall me. There was nothing personal about it. Why should I quarrel with a man for doing what he thought to be his duty?" So he dined with Lord Grey, who was far too great a gentleman not to appreciate what he justly described as "most handsome and honourable conduct." The two men met as friends, and parted each with a higher opinion of the other. Very soon afterwards Harry Smith had his reward. On the 18th of June every year

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the Duke of Wellington gave a dinner, which grew to be known as the "Waterloo Banquet," to his old brother officers. He invited Harry Smith, and when dinner was over rose and proposed his health—the proudest compliment that he could have paid to him and one sufficient to heal all wounded feelings. The Duke was then past eighty, and this was the last of the Waterloo banquets, for three months later Harry Smith was chosen to carry his standard at his funeral.

For five years after this Harry Smith held a command in England, and then very sadly he dropped out of the service. He had no children, and, having therefore no reason to save money, he had indulged himself in his favourite passion —horses. He was a very fine horseman, and had, as he said, driven four-in-hand in every country that he had visited; but having settled down in London he could not afford to keep horses. One old friend, the Arab horse "Aliwal," which he had ridden in all his battles in India, he had brought back from Calcutta to England, taken from England to the Cape, and carried back once more to England. The animal was wonderfully trained, and so tame that he was always led round Harry Smith's dining-room table on the anniversary of the Battle of Aliwal. "Aliwal" was now twenty-two years old, and his old master, unable to keep him longer and

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fearing that he might have unhappy years before him, resolved to shoot him. He did so with his own hand, disappearing one evening before dinner and not presenting himself again until the next morning. He survived "Aliwal" only a few years, and died on the 12th of October 1860. Of the "battle-honours" inscribed on the colours of the British Army he had the right to place against his name no fewer than twenty-one; but even these do not commemorate the full range of his services. And everywhere he did his duty.

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IX

THE BURMESE EXPEDITION, 1824–1826

In January 1824, in consequence of repeated insults, outrages, and encroachments, the Government of India declared war against the King of Ava and decided to invade Burma. Little was known about the country. A few officers, employed on diplomatic missions, had ascended the four hundred miles from the mouth of the Irrawaddy to Ava, and had reported such things as they could see from the river. A few merchants had likewise touched at points on the coast and had told what story they had to tell. But beyond their information nothing was known of the geography, climate, and people of Burma. It was generally understood that the Irrawaddy ran from north to south of it for perhaps a thousand miles, and that the southern part of the country, on the lower course of the river, presented the usual features of the delta of a great river in the tropics, which signified vast tracts of marsh and forest steaming under a vertical sun, swarming with mosquitoes,

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liable to heavy inundations during the rainy season, and unhealthy in the last degree to Europeans.

In these circumstances the Government decided that the expedition had better land at Rangoon, the mouth of the Irrawaddy, and ascend the four hundred miles of stream to Ava. The river was the great highway. The capital and all of the principal cities were situated on its banks. It would be necessary to send a large naval force, principally of light craft well adapted for shallow waters; native boats would no doubt be procurable to convey the troops; and it was reckoned that the entire journey from Rangoon to Ava might be accomplished in six weeks. The country was densely populated and held abundance of cattle, so that there should be no difficulty in procuring supplies, and, if not grain, at least any quantity of rice, which might serve as a substitute. The Burmese were not supposed to be good fighters; they had by all accounts no fortresses; and, at any rate, being undisciplined, they could not hope to withstand disciplined soldiers. The one thing reckoned needful was that there should be plenty of water in the river to enable the flotilla to ascend it with ease; and therefore the troops ought to reach Rangoon at the very beginning of the rainy season. Accordingly, some fifty vessels of war were prepared as a naval force,

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and ten thousand men were shipped off to Rangoon. About four thousand of these were British troops and the remainder sepoys, the whole being under the command of Major-General Sir Archibald Campbell, who had seen much service in the Peninsular War.

In the second week of May the expedition came before Rangoon. The men-of-war easily silenced one or two Burmese batteries which had opened fire, and the troops then landed to find themselves in a deserted city. There was literally not a soul to be seen, and not merely no human creature, but not a bullock, nor a goat, nor a fowl, nor even a vegetable. There was not a boat, nor a waggon, nor a cart, nothing but a wilderness of empty dwellings surrounded by swamps, which the rains would soon turn into meres, and by jungle nearly as impassable as the swamps. The Burmese might not be disciplined soldiers, but they were at least disciplined citizens. They had been ordered to quit the city and to leave nothing behind them, and they had obeyed. They were wise, for the penalty for disobedience was that the culprit was tied hand and foot to two bamboo spars in the form of St Andrew's cross, that his tongue was pulled out and pierced with a splinter of bamboo to prevent him from withdrawing it again into his mouth, and that he was then left to the tender mercies of the sun and the flies.

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But wise or unwise, they obeyed orders and left Rangoon a desert.

Campbell was left in a situation of such difficulty that he must seriously have thought of re-embarking and sailing back to India. Counting upon plentiful supplies of fresh meat and vegetables at Rangoon and the surrounding country, the authorities in India had sent the expedition to sea with little more food than was sufficient for the voyage. This food consisted principally of salt pork and biscuit, and under the influence of the climate the pork rapidly became putrid and the biscuit mouldy. Dysentery therefore broke out immediately; and it was certain that the men, being weakened by insufficient nourishment, would fall easy victims to malarial fever. Moreover, the rainy season was at hand and there were no native workmen in Rangoon to build shelter for the troops. Lastly, Campbell was unable to advance from Rangoon because he had not the means of transporting food either by land or by water, and was therefore obliged to sit still. However, Campbell had been ordered to advance upon Ava, and it was his business to obey and not to raise difficulties; so he wrote to Calcutta to ask for all of the many things which he needed, and meanwhile resolved to do his best.

The first thing was to place Rangoon in a state of defence, which was the more necessary

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since there was thick jungle all round it on the side of the land, where skulking Burmese could conceal themselves and steal out, as now and again they did, to murder unwary sentries. The naval force had also to take its precautions, for the Burmese had war-boats, armed with cannon, which were not to be despised, and fire-rafts which they held ready to float down-stream upon the British shipping, and so drive them out of the river altogether. The next thing was to keep the troops actively employed, so that they should not brood over their troubles; and, accordingly, Campbell collected such boats as could be spared from the fleet and made a series of little raids upon the Burmese with such small detachments as he could carry food for. And now he learned why there were no fortified towns in Burma. The practice of the native soldiers was to throw up stockades of bamboo and teak, sunk deep into the earth, fifteen feet high, and strongly and scientifically built. At first he thought of knocking these to pieces with cannon; and, as he had no draught-animals, he wore his men out by making them haul heavy guns over deep, marshy ground and through long grass and scrub at the rate of four hundred yards an hour. Then finding that cannon-shot were useless to make a breach in the stockades, he simply launched his men at the wall of bamboo, hoping that they would

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hoist each other over. But the height was too great, and after one costly repulse he hit upon the right method of dealing with stockades—to carry scaling ladders and so climb over them. The Burmese were bad fighters, and always ran away as soon as a few soldiers dropped down among them; and, as they always committed the mistake of making the entrance in rear of the stockade too small, the British could be sure of overtaking some of the fugitives while they crowded together and jostled each other in their hurry to escape.

After three weeks' work Campbell had cleared the enemy out of a line of stockades which extended for nearly a mile up the river from Rangoon, and had also taken and occupied a post yet two miles farther upstream. He then returned to Rangoon and found a terrible state of things. The place was one vast hospital, and the vaster because one more British regiment and two more battalions of sepoys had arrived from India during his absence. Europeans and sepoys alike were creeping about like ghosts, one and all reduced to shadows by malarial fever. Not many seem to have died of this alone, but, being worn to extreme weakness, they succumbed the more readily to scurvy, dysentery, and what in these days is termed enteric fever. Hundreds of men died for want of the simplest articles of hospital diet, for there were no milk, no bread,

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no eggs, no fish, no fresh meat—nothing but rice, mouldy biscuit, and putrescent pork. Moreover, gangrene had established itself in the hospitals, and the slightest wounds proved fatal. The sepoys suffered rather less than the English from malarial fever, but had their own peculiar affliction in the bites of leeches, which swarmed in the jungle and long grass. In them leech-bite produced hideous ulcers, sometimes so severe that they could only be arrested by amputation, which in its turn led to gangrene, and so to death. Every day dozens of men were buried; but even this was difficult, for, as fast as a grave was dug in that water-logged soil, it filled with water, and corpses could only be huddled into a shallow pool and hastily covered with earth before they should float to the surface. Nothing more hideous can be imagined than the state of Rangoon in the summer and autumn of 1824.

Though Rangoon is only six hundred miles by sea from Calcutta, Campbell was still without proper food for his men or water-transport to move even a single company; so that hope deferred was added to all other elements of depression. Yet the army, to use the expressive modern phrase, "carried on." Campbell, as the only chance of keeping his men alive, employed all who were fit for work upon constant little aggressive expeditions. One of these met with

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a slight repulse; but the sight of their comrades' bodies, barbarously mutilated by the Burmese, stirred the men to vengeful feeling, and they speedily made good their first reverse. In all other cases the British attacks were successful, and indeed there was more hardship in the journey to reach a stockade than danger in storming it. One party, officers and men alike, had nothing to eat for a week but half-boiled ham and rice for breakfast, dinner, and supper, without even a morsel of biscuit. It must be remembered, too, that the troops, though on active service in a tropical delta, had none but their English clothing—the ridiculous scarlet garment called a coatee, high on the throat, ending at the waist in front, and with absurd long tails behind, white duck trousers, and a high, heavy, black shako, which gave no protection from the sun, on their heads. Even, therefore, if a man escaped sunstroke, he had to endure endless discomfort from the utter unsuitability of his dress and equipment. But hardship, privation, and disease could not break the spirit of these men. If they died, they died. While they lived, they carried on.

At the beginning of December a few private speculators arrived with supplies of food, which, though sold at prices which few officers could afford, gave promise that better days were coming. This was timely, for Campbell had warning that the Burmese were preparing a

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great counter-offensive movement by land and water to drive his army into the sea, and had taken all precautions to meet it. Though the enemy were contemptible fighting men they had produced one great leader, Bundoola by name, who was not only a very brave man, but quite a Napoleon in his way. He brought some forty or fifty thousand men down before Rangoon, and formed them in battle array with a rapidity, order, and precision which evoked the greatest admiration from the British officers. Some of them, indeed, who had fought many actions against the French, declared that no general could have taken up his ground in a more masterly fashion. While they watched, the Burmese were observed to be digging, and in a couple of hours not a man of them was to be seen. Of every two Burmese soldiers one carried a spade, with which he excavated a shelter-hole for himself and comrade, and from that starting-point would sap his way forward mile by mile. For a moment the British were overcome by a feeling of dismay. It was something rather startling to see forty thousand men disappear underground in a couple of hours; and, with their nerves racked by the suffering and sickness of the past weary months, even officers felt some apprehension as to what might come next. But they were very soon relieved by the actual delivery of the attack.

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There is no occasion to say more of Bundoola's grand manœuvre, except that it was easily foiled both by water and land, though it was a full fortnight before he would finally accept defeat after several engagements. He then retired fifty miles up the river; and the inhabitants of Rangoon, released from the terror of his surveillance, swarmed back into the city, and gladly took service as drivers, rowers, and workmen with the British. Moreover, fresh meat and vegetables began to make their appearance, at first in small quantities, and later in abundance, so that the camp was no longer haunted by the spectre of scurvy. Both draught-animals and boats, too, were beginning to arrive from India, though not yet in nearly sufficient quantities; and Campbell, at the beginning of 1825, looked forward to an advance in earnest. It was indeed high time. It had been expected of him that he should reach Ava in six weeks. He had been in Burma nine months, and of the four hundred miles to Ava had covered just four.

In March he moved up the river fifty miles and attacked a huge nest of stockades there erected by Bundoola. The operations, as frequently happens, did not go quite smoothly, and at one moment it seemed likely that they would be wrecked by want of supplies. Campbell tried to obtain them from the country; but he found that the Burmese commander had pursued the

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same tactics as when the British force had first landed at Rangoon. The people fled before him carrying everything with them; and when by chance he caught some straggling inhabitant, the poor wretch could only ejaculate "Bundoola" and relapse into trembling silence. At last Campbell found himself with some four thousand men in face of Bundoola's main stockade, which was a mile long and from four to eight hundred yards broad, with a garrison of fifteen thousand men and an armament of one hundred and fifty cannon and swivel-guns. It was so immensely strong that Campbell despaired of taking it without something like a regular siege, which Bundoola by frequent sallies did his best to prevent. However, Campbell got his guns into position, and, after firing for one day, he found to his amazement that the Burmese had fled from this mighty stronghold, abandoning all their guns and supplies. Bundoola, the master-hand which had held everything together, had been killed by a shell, and his whole host had melted away.

A few days later emissaries came in from the King of Ava to propose negotiations for peace. Campbell, mistrusting these advances, answered that he would discuss terms when he reached Prome, a hundred miles further up the river and one hundred and fifty miles from Rangoon. He reached Prome at the end of April and found

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it in flames. The overtures for peace had been no more than a trick to gain time, and the Burmese had, as usual, retreated, destroying or carrying off everything that could be of use to him, laying waste the villages and driving the people into the jungle. Though Bundoola was dead, discipline evidently had not perished with him. All hopes of ending the war without another campaign now vanished. Ava was still two hundred miles distant; there were only a few weeks more before the breaking of the rains, during which active operations had been proved to be impossible. There was nothing to be done except to halt at Prome, and make it, if possible, into an advanced base for the final movement upon Ava; and the troops must make up their minds to another year of sweltering heat and fever, with hardship and fatigue to follow.

So there Campbell's column settled down, and the inhabitants, being assured of protection and good treatment, soon returned to the city and rebuilt it. The villagers also, being no longer coerced by the Burmese army, streamed back to their deserted places down the river and resumed their former life. Confidence in the British grew rapidly. The discipline of the troops was so excellent and their behaviour to the Burmese so kindly that in a very short time there was comfort and abundance in Prome. Large droves of fine oxen emerged from the

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jungle where they had been hidden, and fleets of canoes appeared on the river, all at the service of the British, who offered good money for them. The men were happy, and, considering the climate and the trials through which they had passed, fairly healthy. At any rate, if they fell sick they were nourished on good food, and not upon poison, as they had been during the last rainy season. And so it came to pass that during the five months of the halt at Prome there died not more than one man in seven of the British soldiers.

In October fresh negotiators arrived from Ava, and matters were advanced to such a point that an armistice was declared and a neutral zone demarcated. But immediately afterwards the Burmese violated all conditions and advanced upon Prome. Campbell sallied out to meet them with four native battalions; but his plans went awry, and he lost two hundred killed and wounded without accomplishing anything. Three days of sharp fighting soon set matters right, and in the second week of December he fairly started again on the way to Ava. The roads were execrable, and two days of heavy rain made them impassable, for they were not roads but mere paths through the jungle. The transport and the artillery were brought to a standstill, and the way was choked with dead and dying cattle. Quantities of precious biscuit

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and rice were destroyed by the downpour; but still the troops toiled on through dripping elephant-grass, fifteen and twenty feet high, and could find at the end of the march no open ground for their bivouac but the dry bed of a rivulet. On the next day, the 13th of December, cholera broke out in the army, striking down the British right and left; but Campbell marched on—indeed he had no choice—and arriving at the stockade from which the Burmese armies had advanced upon Prome he found terrible signs that the enemy was in rapid retreat.

Both within and without the stockades the ground was strewn with the dying and the dead, wounded soldiers who could move no further, and wretched villagers who had been driven from their homes to make a desert before the invading British, and were now left to perish from sickness and want. Rows of new graves showed that Campbell's coming had interrupted the work of burial, and the corpses of the crucified proved that the King of Ava was still enforcing the same ruthless discipline. The only sounds were the snarling and screaming of huge packs of dogs and flights of vultures as they fought for the flesh of the dead; and the stench was appalling. Campbell moved on for two miles in the hope of escaping from these horrors, but in vain. Cholera was abroad, and through march after march for fifty miles there was no relief from the

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same hideous sights and the same foul breath of corruption. The villages had been burned, the cattle had been driven off, the villagers had been hurried away, except those who had been stayed by the grip of cholera. Not a living man was seen except the dying, and they and the dead were everywhere. The very camping grounds had to be cleared of corpses before the tents could be pitched; and officers and men, plodding on day after day through the ghastly solitude, began to wonder how so dreadful a campaign would end. But their orders were to march to Ava, and orders must be obeyed.

On Christmas Day the column drew near to the place where the Burmese army was said to have rallied, and on the morrow emissaries again arrived from the King of Ava to open negotiations. Campbell, refusing to be deceived, marched on, but the overtures were repeated. A truce was proclaimed; and on the 31st of December Campbell wrote that he hoped that the war was at last at an end. For nearly three weeks the Burmese envoys quibbled and paltered; and on the 18th of January 1826 Campbell denounced the armistice. On the 19th he stormed the enemy's stockade and drove them again into retreat; and then he resumed the weary march on Ava, which, after all his hard work and incessant fighting, was still one hundred and fifty miles distant.

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The tracks by which he moved were the worst and the country the barrenest that he had yet encountered. The cattle grew weak from want of forage, and he was obliged to take all horses from the officers and use them for the army. Fresh emissaries arrived from the King of Ava but he heeded them not, and marched on until, within eighty miles of Ava, he came upon the enemy drawn up in the open in order of battle. They outnumbered him by ten to one; but after a running fight, which lasted for five hours over four miles of ground, he dispersed the enemy with very heavy loss. The Burmese commander, returning to Ava with the news of his defeat, was at once beheaded; but the King now sent a message to say that he accepted Campbell's terms. There was still some haggling, and Campbell had advanced to within forty-five miles of Ava before the King finally gave way. He yielded to the British two provinces and a substantial indemnity; and the war ended on the 24th of February 1826. Campbell had been told that he would reach Ava in six weeks. To arrive within fifty miles of it had taken him twenty-two months.

Thus at last ended the first Burmese war. The story is known to few, though it is one of the most remarkable in the history of the British Army. First, we must take account of the qualities of the enemy. Had the Burmese

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possessed half of the fighting spirit of, say, the Maoris of New Zealand, we could never have accomplished the conquest of their country. They were, perhaps, better armed on the whole than our own men, for they had abundance not only of matchlocks but also of light artillery—swivel-guns which could be carried and placed in position by two men, and which, using a far heavier bullet and a larger charge of powder, outranged the British musket. Their peculiar talent for "digging themselves in" at the shortest notice, and for sapping their way forward from their first entrenchment indicates also a sound military instinct. Apart from these improvised shelters their leaders possessed a positive genius for choosing strong defensive positions and fortifying them rapidly and efficiently with stockades. English officers acknowledged that the most skilful engineers of all the European armies could not have excelled them in this respect.

The greatest of their leaders, Bundoola, must have been a very remarkable man. He could frame great plans for great ends, and carry them forward with unflinching tenacity. He could handle thirty thousand men in the field with a mastery that no European general could have outdone, and, though he was not guiltless of an occasional tactical blunder, he failed rather through the

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timidity of his soldiers than through any incapacity of his own. He was full of wiles. On one occasion Campbell with much difficulty brought up his force before a great stockade in the evening and counted upon dealing a really heavy blow at his enemy next morning. All through the night there was the clamour of a great host within the stockade; and Campbell, having made elaborate dispositions, advanced next morning to find no one in the stronghold but one old woman. Small parties had been left behind to yell through the hours of darkness while the Burmese army retreated, and had slipped away at the last moment. Bundoola was, moreover, a man of dauntless spirit. Though again and again defeated, in spite of his numerical superiority of five to one, he never lost heart. He fell back, indeed, but only to prepare fresh resistance and present a new front. He was no doubt a terrible commander, for he would cut down gunners who missed their mark with his own hand, and his very name, as we have seen, was a sound of affright; but none the less he was a very fine fellow. Had Bundoola lived he might have made the achievement of victory even more arduous than it was, though he could hardly have averted it altogether.

For the great principle of the Burmese defence was laid down before Bundoola took command

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in the valley of the Irrawaddy, and was followed unswervingly after his death. There was nothing new in the laying waste of a country before an invading enemy. The system is probably as old as warfare itself. The British had had to deal with it when fighting Tippoo Sahib in Mysore and only with great difficulty had overcome it. Wellington himself had tried, though only with partial success, to take advantage of it, when he retreated through Portugal to the lines of Torres Vedras in 1810. But seldom, if ever, has this method of devastation been applied so thoroughly and so firmly as in the first Burmese war. The reader may realise its significance a little better if he imagines an army marching from London to Edinburgh along the Great Northern Railway and finding within a mile on either side of it not a living human creature, not an ox, not a horse, not an ass, not a sheep, not a fowl, not an egg, not a grain of corn, not so much as a cabbage in a garden, every town burned and every village destroyed. Of course this merciless creation of a desert could only be achieved by untold cruelty and at the cost of unspeakable misery to the inhabitants. We have seen how, as the British advanced, the poor creatures joyfully sought their protection; and beyond doubt the King of Ava yielded at last because he was able to coerce his people into devastation no longer. Had he been able to

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continue it for another two months, himself retiring up the river from Ava, Campbell would have had no choice but to return to Rangoon.

This, therefore, may be said to have been a long struggle of endurance between a disciplined —or at least an obedient—population, and a disciplined force of sailors and soldiers. I have said little of the part played by the King's and the Indian navies, but it was most important and most admirably performed. They fought successfully with Burmese war-boats, cannonaded stockades and were heavily cannonaded in return, and foiled many attacks of Burmese fire-rafts. These last were the more formidable because there are petroleum wells in Burma, and the timbers of the rafts were soaked in petroleum; but the bluejackets always contrived to turn these flaming vessels ashore in safe places, where they harmlessly burned themselves out. The armed vessels and their convoys of provision boats also, of course, accompanied the army up the river on every enterprise to the very end, and this must have been trying work enough. Moreover, one of these vessels was a steamer—a primitive, puffing, paddle-wheel affair called the *Diana*—which was the very first steamer ever employed in British warfare. She was quite invaluable, but she must, with her primitive engines and boilers, have been very hot to live in under a tropical sun, and

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very difficult to keep in order. Yet she was at work to the very end, and in the river abreast of the army when the treaty was signed; and the fact reflects endless credit upon her engineers.

Of course, the bluejackets shared in a great measure the hardships of the army in the matter of food, and a lamentable number of them died. But campaigning afloat has its advantages when compared with campaigning ashore. It has, of course, also its peculiar dangers, for there is the peril not only of shot and shell but of drowning, if a ship be sunk. Nevertheless, so long as his ship remains afloat, a sailor may be envied by a soldier. He carries with him everything that he wants, and, no matter how severe an action he may have fought or how heavy the losses that may have been sustained, he has everything close to his hand. The wounded can be carried to a comfortable mattress, in two minutes; and the unhurt have their food and drink ready stored for them, a roof over their heads and dry boards under their feet. Wounded soldiers may lie for hours untended, and be finally carried in rough carts, whose every movement is agony, along miles of rough road before they reach a hospital. The unhurt at the end of a long, weary march may have to go to some distance to find water, may have to wait hours for the food-waggons to come in, and very likely may have to lie down without any food

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at all under drenching rain and make the best of things until next morning.

It is in consideration of these greater hardships that I have given the army prominence in this story; and, thinking over things, I still marvel how Archibald Campbell ever succeeded in bringing his troops to within fifty miles of Ava. In those days every Indian expedition started with high hopes of prize-money, possible plunder, and glory. Indian campaigns had been fought, for the most part, in considerable comfort, every officer having plenty of servants and the men plenty of comforts, with the excitement of a certain number of sharp actions—victorious as a matter of course—to make an agreeable variety and give opportunities for distinction. The first sight of Rangoon and of the huge gilded dome of its greatest pagoda must have specially whetted the appetite for prize-money. Then within forty-eight hours of landing the truth must have come home to them that they had nothing to look for but privation, misery, and death. Ridiculously clothed, infamously fed, without so much as a drop of milk if they fell sick, bathed in sweat except when drenched with rain, eaten up by mosquitoes and the other plagues of the tropics, they must remain almost helpless, penned up in Rangoon until the Indian Government should send them decent provisions and the transport to carry them by land

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and water. They died by hundreds, but they did not lose heart. From time to time an attack upon the enemy provided welcome distraction to those who were fit to take part in them. But these meant intense fatigue, leech-bites and other torments, possibly immediate death in action, possibly slower though not less certain death from wounds. Fever, dysentery, and scurvy were with them always. Only grand discipline and the finest spirit could have saved that force from perishing, as a British Army has perished before now, of sheer despair.

The months of enforced inactivity once over, patience made way for cheerfulness. Fever and dysentery were always among them, but scurvy at least disappeared. Steadily the march upon Ava went forward, and steadily dwindled the number of the marchers as they advanced; but the survivors went on. Then cholera came upon them. It mattered not; the survivors went on. At one moment the nerves even of the strongest seemed likely to give way under the trial. "We appeared," wrote one staff-officer, "to traverse a vast wilderness from which mankind had fled; and our little camp of two thousand men seemed but a speck in the desolate and dreary waste which surrounded it." With every day's march the little camp grew smaller, for the way was marked by graves; but no matter how little it might be,

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the men inspired by duty and discipline and in virtue of them they prevailed. Few know even the name of Archibald Campbell, but a leader who could uphold such a spirit under such conditions must have been endowed with rare qualities of will and nerve, moral strength, and courage of the very highest order.

The five British regiments which first landed in Rangoon were the Thirteenth (Somerset Light Infantry), Thirty-eighth (1st South Staffords), Forty-first (1st Welsh), Forty-seventh (1st North Lancs) and Eighty-ninth (2nd Irish Fusiliers). Their joint strength when they landed was 150 officers and 3586 men; of whom there died 61 officers and 3115 men. The Hundred and second (1st Dublin Fusiliers), then an East India Company's regiment, lost 600 men out of 900. In addition to these the 2nd Royals joined Campbell in 1825. One and all of these bear, or bore, the name of AVA, on their colours, but few even among their own officers and men realise what it cost them to gain this "honour." It is true that not one in twenty of the dead were killed in action; but to me, at least, the word AVA means one of the very greatest achievements of the British soldier.

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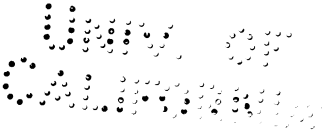

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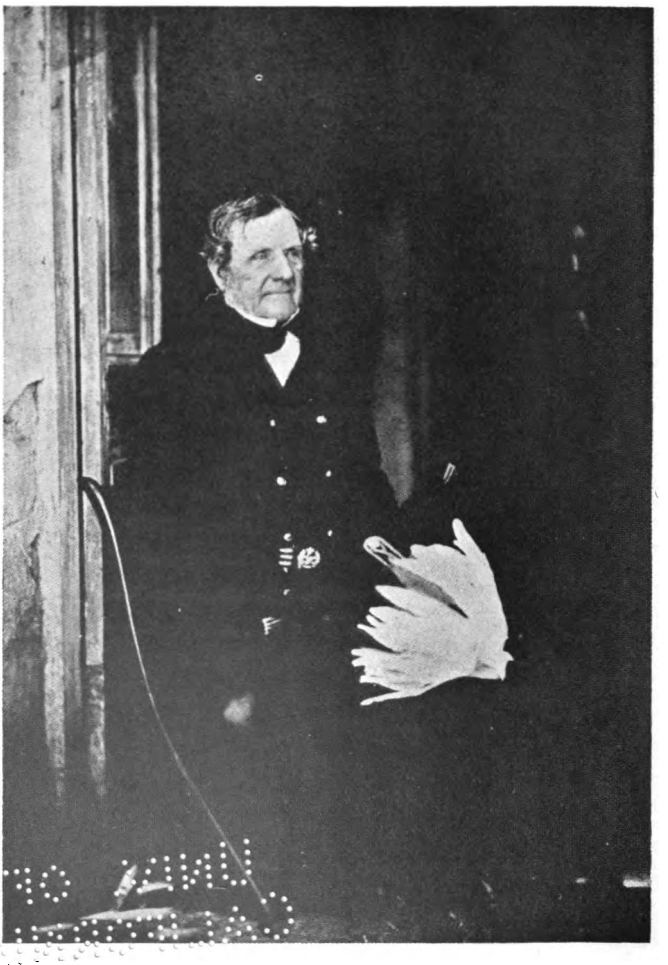

LORD RAGLAN

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FITZROY SOMERSET, FIRST LORD RAGLAN

In my nursery, when I was a child, there hung a large black-and-white engraving with an inscription below which in due time I painfully spelled out to be: "The Commanders of the Allied Armies in the East." There were many gay, foreign-looking gentlemen in the group with noble cocked hats, moustaches, and gold lace; but the figure that always attracted me was that of a mounted man of singularly noble appearance with the sleeve of his right arm empty and sewn to his plain frock-coat. This, I was told, was Lord Raglan. For some reason he exerted a strange fascination upon me. I remember passing a one-armed commissionaire, with his sleeve sewn to his coat, in some street in London, and my incredulous disappointment when the patient maid, who was towing me along the pavement, positively refused to admit that he could be Lord Raglan. It was not until we had passed two more one-armed commissionaires in quick succession that I

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had to acknowledge bitterly that she might be right.

And now after more than sixty years I have had to study my childhood's hero closely and critically, and rejoice to find him not diminished in stature. His career is fairly well known. He was on Wellington's staff throughout most of the Peninsular War, lost his right arm in the campaign of Waterloo, and presently settled down to a long career at the Horse Guards, being Military Secretary when Wellington was Commander-in-Chief. Lord Fitzroy Somerset, as he then was, no doubt was the most popular man in the Army. His gentleness, courtesy, and tact were a proverb, and were extended equally to officers of the highest and lowest rank. I knew one who called on him as a newly commissioned ensign of eighteen, and who to the end of his days (he lived to be past ninety) never forgot the kindly affability of Lord Fitzroy. It was this loyal and patient Military Secretary who, when the Duke was becoming difficult, testy, and unreasonable through age, stood between his old chief and all public complaint or odium. He alone knew what a delicate task this was, but he said not a word about it; for his was the silent loyalty, expressed not in words but in deeds.

In 1852 he was made a peer, and in 1854 he was called away from his desk to take command

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of an army in the field, being then in his sixty-seventh year. Such a task was no light one for a man of his age in the most favourable circumstances. In the first place, he was to act in co-operation with a French army under a French commander and upon no account to strain or endanger the alliance between France and England; and in the second, the plan of operations imposed upon him was as insane as ever was sanctioned by an English Cabinet, which is to say a great deal. The handling of his French colleagues promised in itself to be a most difficult task, for English and French, try as they may to be friendly together, can never quite succeed, and in 1854 the memory of Waterloo still rankled in the French military mind. To make matters worse, France had just passed under the rule of Napoleon the Third, and the officers who had helped him to rise to that great height, though they were not all of them the choicest in the French Army, were necessarily rewarded by receiving high commands in the army of the East. To Raglan, an exceedingly high-bred gentleman, who was the soul of honour and loathed crooked practice or intrigue, the prospect of working with some of them can hardly have been pleasing. But that was a thought that did not occur to him. He had been ordered to co-operate heartily with the French, and that was enough

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for him. He wrote and spoke French well; he had not fought against the French for many of the best years of his life without learning something about them; and, for the rest, it was his duty to use all his tact to ensure that two naturally discordant elements should move in harmony.

Though the favoured sphere of operations was from the first the Crimean Peninsula the troops were landed first at Gallipoli, ready to meet a Russian advance upon Constantinople, and then on the coast of Bulgaria. Here Marshal St Arnaud, the French Commander-in-Chief, gave Raglan some specimens of his rather erratic character; but Raglan had a singular faculty for suppressing wild proposals and making his own will prevail without giving offence to anyone; and his relations with St Arnaud were from first to last most friendly. Three serious troubles, however, arose from the sojourn in Bulgaria. The first was that the French brought with them cholera from Marseilles, and that both armies, apart from many deaths due to that awful scourge, were dangerously enervated by the climate. Next, the French imprudently sent a division into the unhealthiest marshes of the Danube, where it was almost annihilated by sickness. This was no more than a mistake such as frequently occurs in war; but armies do not like other armies,

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even of those allied with them, to witness their mistakes; and such misfortunes easily awake bad blood between them. Lastly, the Turks as well as the French were the allies of the British; and in Bulgaria the British soldier took a violent dislike to the Turk. He saw the Bulgarian peasants, who had sold him eggs and fowls and vegetables, insolently and violently robbed of their poor little gains by their Turkish masters; and, being himself generally sprung from peasant stock, he was very indignant over such arrogant oppression. In fact nothing would have pleased them better than to fight his Turkish allies.

At last the time came for striking the great blow, long projected by the British Government and frantically urged by the press, in the Crimean Peninsula. That peninsula is connected with the mainland of Russia by a very narrow isthmus, and might, therefore, with proper management, have been isolated and overpowered with no very extravagant effort. But by his instructions Raglan was bound down to besiege Sebastopol, which left all the might of Russia free to fall upon his rear while he was engaged with Sebastopol in front. A veteran general of the Peninsular War wrote privately to Ministers to warn them that the whole design was sheer madness; and no one knew it better than Raglan. Again, when an army lands in a hostile

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country over sea, common sense dictates that it shall have close at hand a port of disembarkation where ships, conveying the ten thousand things necessary for an army in the field, may lie in safety, and where a base of operations may be established. The British Cabinet ignored these little things. British troops had often landed on an open beach in an enemy's country before; let them do so again. But how were the troops to be fed, for even soldiers (though civilians sometimes forget it) cannot live without food? Oh, let the food be landed on the beach! But if rough weather comes, and the surf forbids a landing, and the ships are blown off the coast, the army may starve. And even if supplies can be landed, how can an army leave the landing place unless they have waggons and carts to carry them? All these vital points the Cabinet ignored. There was then no such body as the Army Service Corps. Wellington had organised one in the Peninsula, but Parliament had been resolute in sweeping it out of existence after the peace of 1815. Raglan very early begged that some such corps should be organised without delay; but the Government never moved a finger for more than nine months. Nevertheless, Raglan never complained. He knew that he was committed to an insane enterprise; but he had his orders, and it was for him as a good soldier to do his best to carry them out.

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So the army did land, though the men were so weak that Raglan dared not require them to carry their packs; and Raglan realised that if he were to capture Sebastopol he must do so by a sudden rapid stroke before the Russians could prepare effective resistance. The landing had taken place at a point some miles north of Sebastopol; and the Russians drew up an army to bar the advance of the Allies upon the fortress. This army was utterly defeated at the battle of the Alma on the 20th of September, the English bearing the brunt of the work, and the French doing remarkably little. At the close of the action Raglan begged St Arnaud to follow up the victory at once with French troops. St Arnaud refused. Raglan then suggested that each army should send a certain number of troops in pursuit. Again St Arnaud refused; and Raglan dared not send English troops alone, for they might—they probably would—have walked straight into Sebastopol. Then, indeed, Raglan's anxieties would have been at an end, but, though the English would have been very jubilant, the French would have been very jealous; and any unhappy accident might have made it impossible to keep the two armies within ten miles of each other. Different armies of the same nation have often been so jealous of each other that they could hardly be kept from flying at each other's throats; and between

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Allied armies of different nations ill-feeling may be even more bitter. So, perforce, Raglan sacrificed himself on the altar of the Alliance, which was to claim many victims before it was satiated.

When at last the Allies did move on from the Alma, Raglan wished to assault Sebastopol from the north side at once; but St Arnaud refused. Time and speed were all important in so dangerous an enterprise; but the Alliance imposed delay. It was then resolved to march round to the south side of Sebastopol; and, from the relative positions of the two Allied armies, it was inevitable that the British should lead the way and arrive before the south side first. An immediate assault upon that quarter would most probably have been successful, and prominent English officers strongly urged it upon Raglan. But once again French jealousy was to be dreaded, the more so as St Arnaud, who had from the first been sickly, was now actually dying; and it would have appeared very unseemly to take advantage of his prostration. Raglan was the very last man to think of such a thing; and thus once again the object of the war was sacrificed to the maintenance of the Alliance. It was now decided to bombard Sebastopol for a short period intensely and then to assault. The French bombardment was a failure. Whether from want of skill or from

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sheer misfortune, they found that their batteries were unduly exposed to the Russian artillery; and after the explosion of a couple of their magazines they ceased fire. The British bombardment was most effective, and an assault by them alone would probably have been successful; but then the French would have been left out, and there would have been ill-feeling not only at the front but at Paris and in London. So for the sake of maintaining the Alliance nothing was done. The Alliance in fact was so delicate a plant that every military object had to be set aside in order to keep it alive.

No doubt the French felt its inconvenience as fully as the British; but during the first two months of the campaign it was certainly the French who brought everything to naught. The truth is that St Arnaud was utterly unfit to command an army in the field; and the fact was so far recognised by the French Government itself that a colonel with brains was attached to his staff to keep him in the right way. But even if St Arnaud had been competent, which he was not, he was a dying man, subject to attacks of pain so agonising as to render him unfit for any work. Raglan never quarrelled with him nor he with Raglan, but none the less he wrecked all of Raglan's plans. It was possible for Raglan to carry out the orders of his Government only by taking the most

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terrible risks, and, every time that St. Arnaud thwarted him by refusing to accept one of these risks, Raglan had to prepare himself for another more formidable still. The thing that he dreaded above all things was that his army might have to spend the winter before Sebastopol. Before he even left Bulgaria for the Crimea he urged upon the Government the seriousness of this question of wintering; but the Government left everything to chance. They had drifted into war with Russia; they had drifted into the Crimean campaign, and had no ideas except to let everything drift.

Upon reaching the south side of Sebastopol Raglan had restored his communication with the fleet and with England, from which he had been severed for a very dangerous and anxious week. There were three little ports convenient for the purposes of the Allied armies, Balaclava, the most easterly, and two more some eight miles to west of it. The French general, Caurobert, who had succeeded St Arnaud, very handsomely offered Raglan his choice, only stipulating that, if he chose Balaclava, the English must take the eastern end of the lines before Sebastopol. This was most just and right; and unfortunately Raglan's naval adviser, upon whom he was bound to depend on such a question, urged him to select Balaclava. This was a great mistake, for Balaclava was far too small for the purpose

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and was eight miles from the camp, up a steep hill, whereas the other two harbours were far more spacious and within easier distance over easier ground. There were a hundred things to be done in order to make the British position safe and commodious—defences to be thrown up and a road to be made, to mention only two of the most important; but no men could be spared to do them. The exigencies of the Alliance having forbidden Raglan to seize Sebastopol by a sudden stroke, he was obliged to employ all of his soldiers in preparation for the attack on the fortress. It was everything to him to capture it before winter came, otherwise his men would die of cold and exposure; and to this great object he devoted every effort.

Before autumn was ended the Allied armies were threatened by Russian forces from without, exactly as had been predicted; and the Allies were obliged to prosecute their operations with one eye to the front upon the garrison of Sebastopol, and another to the rear upon the army that watched them from that side. The first Russian menace, which was aimed at Balaclava, was easily foiled; but the second—the furious attack upon the British which is called the battle of Inkerman—was only repelled with great difficulty and heavy loss. In fact, if the Russians had known their business, they should have made an end of the Allied armies

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on the 5th of November 1854; but they bungled their affairs; the British fought desperately; and the day was saved. But from thenceforth, though the Allies proceeded nominally with the siege of Sebastopol, they were really the besieged.

Nine days later the weather broke suddenly with a violent storm, which laid the camp flat and wrecked more than twenty ships outside Sebastopol. Then winter settled down in earnest. The British were on a bleak plateau without fuel or real shelter. The camp became a sea of mud, and the track from Balaclava was turned into a quagmire. With only a single sheet of canvas above them and the sodden earth below the men suffered terribly. They came back from duty drenched and weary, and found nothing but cold and wet awaiting them. From want of fuel they could not cook their food, much less warm themselves or dry their clothes, and they gnawed their raw salt meat and lay down shivering under a single blanket until their next turn of duty. Overworked—for they spent four and even five nights out of six in the trenches—and under-nourished, their strength gave way under the triple burden of exposure, starvation, and fatigue. Scurvy, dysentery, and cholera wrought havoc among them, and the field-hospitals afforded no less discomfort to them than their own tents. They did not complain. Their fortitude and patience were mar-

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vellous; but they died; and the death of every man signified additional work for those that survived. There was plenty of food and warm clothing at Balaclava, no more than eight miles away, but there were no transport animals to bring it to the camp because there was no forage, and there was no forage because, despite Raglan's repeated requests for it to be sent from England, the Government had neglected to provide it. Even had transport and forage been present, there would still have been no road upon which it could travel without great difficulty, for Raglan had never been able to spare a man to make one. He tried to hire Turkish workmen to construct a road, but they died by fifties; and half of them were fully employed in burying the other half. The food and clothing at Balaclava might just as profitably have been at Constantinople, for the men, already worn out by their military duties, had not strength to walk sixteen miles knee-deep in mud and clay to fetch it. To all appearance the British Army seemed likely to perish to a man upon the bleak plateau above Sebastopol. They had landed in the Crimea in September twenty-six thousand strong. By December they were reduced to little more than ten thousand fit for duty. Six-tenths of these were needed in the trenches before Sebastopol, so that, if the Russians should attempt such another attack as that of Inkerman,

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there would be only three or four thousand men to meet him.

It was in this desperate situation, when his men were dying at the rate of four to five hundred a week, and the survivors seemed to offer an easy prey to the enemy, that Raglan rose to his greatest height. From the very outset of the campaign he had been harassed by endless disappointments, trials, vexations, and anxieties, excessive even for a commander-in-chief in the field. He had never repined, never reproached, never complained. He had never concealed anything that was amiss, but, while faithfully reporting all unfavourable matters, had made the best of things. And now at a time, prolonged for weeks, of extreme peril, he remained calm, cheerful, and resolute. Harrowed to the soul by the sufferings of his men, conscious that he had done all in his power, though vainly, to alleviate them, Raglan was plied daily with gloomy reports and returns, beset daily by despondent subordinates who represented, all too truly, that the burden laid upon officers and men was greater than they could bear, and that nothing lay before them but dissolution. Yet by sheer force of character and moral ascendancy he banished all fears and apprehensions, inspired all with his own double portion of endurance, and his own triumphant sense of duty, and by the mysterious magic of his personality still kept his army

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together. Any day might bring utter disaster. He could not retreat, for that would have meant disgrace and annihilation. He could only stand firm and keep a brave face, for, if for a moment he betrayed the least lack of confidence in himself, the infection of it would spread instantly to all ranks. And he not only kept up the hearts of his officers and men, but he did all that he could to avert panic from the Government at home. He used no foolish dissimulation. The returns which he sent home told their own tale of the dying and the dead. But he drew no harrowing pictures, uttered no lamentations, above all levelled no reproaches at any man. Recrimination could be of no profit. It would not fill the soldiers' bellies nor put shelter over their heads. If he had his difficulties, so no doubt had Ministers. They had sent him on a mad errand, chiefly at the bidding of irresponsible newspapers, and upon all essential points they had failed to supply his wants; but he was in command of the expedition and it was his duty, if he could, to carry it through all trials to ultimate success. So he held back nothing, but added always, "We are doing our best." Never was there a nobler or more self-denying public servant.

But there was a newspaper correspondent with the army with great power of the pen; and the awful conditions of the soldiers before Sebastopol

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through his means became known to the public at home. Ministers had taken note of this gentleman's letters to the Press at a very early stage, for he laid down the law uncompromisingly upon all matters civil, diplomatic, and military, and they had submitted them to Raglan for comment. "I am surprised," answered Raglan gently, "that any statesman should have thought it consistent with his duty to notice such verbiage and idle gossip. . . . It seems to me that the best way to diminish the importance of these reports is not to notice them." The correspondent, who had from the first given the exact strength of every regiment as it arrived at the front, went on later to describe the exact sites of batteries and to furnish other valuable information to the enemy. Raglan then naturally protested, suggesting that, if the correspondent did send home such intelligence, the Press might be asked not to publish it. Ministers took the hint, but the Press did not. That an English magazine might be blown up by a Russian shell and two or three score British soldiers killed or maimed was a small matter, from an editor's point of view, compared with the circulation of his newspaper. But when British soldiers died of hunger, cold, and exposure, furnishing material for many volumes to the correspondent, then an editor at once saw the need to find a scapegoat to bear the responsibility for so deplorable

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a state of things. And therewith the Press entered upon a prolonged and savage attack upon Raglan.

It is needless to add that he took no notice of it. Apart from the consciousness of his innocence of the errors and misdoings which were daily laid to his charge, he held anonymous praise and anonymous blame in equal contempt. Gossip was always busy with men in such a position as his; it was an annoyance that belonged to his station and as such must be endured, as must mosquitoes and sandflies in the tropics. Others might treat the furious articles of irresponsible writers seriously, but, however formidable their declamation, they were founded on imperfect knowledge and unworthy of notice. If it was anyone's duty to defend him against anonymous slanders it lay with the Ministers, who, knowing not what they did, had thrust upon him an enterprise which it was unfair to commit to any general, and had failed to provide him with the means for carrying it on. But Raglan had not been a staff-officer to Wellington for years, both on active service and at the Horse Guards, without learning something of the ways of politics and politicians. The poor Ministers, after all, were doing their best, bad though their best might be. They also, beyond question, were distressed for the Queen's soldiers; they also were beset by a thousand

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difficulties and harassed by a thousand worries. And if these worries and difficulties were of their own making, it was not for a loyal servant to embarrass them by recrimination, but rather to help them by ignoring their blunders and striving with all his power to redeem them. To do otherwise would be unworthy of Wellington's pupil and an English gentleman.

Unfortunately these Ministers had not a like apprehension of their duty to Raglan. It is by no means the rule for an English Cabinet to visit its sins upon an officer, as in the case of Admiral Byng. Castlereagh stood nobly by Sir John Moore when Moore, in his grave at Coruña, could no longer speak for himself. The Minister who had been at the head of the administration of India during the mistakes and disgraces of the first Afghan War, rose boldly in his place in the House of Commons, when members were clamouring to know who was to blame, and said: "I am responsible." And these two have found a worthy successor in our own time. There still lives among us a sometime Prime Minister, who, though his fame may ultimately rest upon the extreme beauty and dignity of his English prose, will long be remembered as the chief who never failed a colleague or a subordinate. But the Ministers of 1854 were not of this stamp. They dreaded the Press, though Raglan did not, and they made no attempt to shield him from

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its attacks. They had no idea of recalling him, for that, at the moment, would have meant sheer ruin to the army, and they could find no one who could adequately take his place; but by saying not a word in his defence they allowed the public to conclude that they had no defence to offer. Finally they allowed themselves to drift (for this was a drifting Government) into the same delusion as the public, and at last they turned upon Raglan with all manner of accusations.

The whole proceeding was unworthy and undignified in the extreme, for they based their charges entirely upon anonymous statements, and gave Raglan no chance of refuting them before they proceeded to pass a censure upon his conduct. Some of their complaints amounted to no more than that no one had seen him perform this or that duty. Now Raglan belonged to an age when what is called "publicity" was still unborn, and did not hail its nativity with favour. When, for instance, he went to visit his sick and wounded soldiers in hospital, he did not sound the trumpet and call the whole world to witness the fact. He simply mounted his horse and went to the hospital without a word to anyone, taking at most a single aide-de-camp with him, and sometimes going absolutely alone. Upon no more solid ground than this Ministers imputed to him, among other things, neglect of his men;

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and, if such an imputation be unjust, it is not only cruel—it is almost blackguardly—to allege it against any commander-in-chief.

Raglan, as may be supposed, was indignant, and righteously indignant. It would have been easy for him, in the first place, to enlighten Ministers as to one very significant fact. When the mad project of the invasion of the Crimea was finally enjoined upon him, he thought seriously of resigning his command, upon the ground that he could not in conscience deliberately lead an army into peril so extreme. Before taking his final decision, however, he consulted two or three of his principal officers in confidence; and with one voice they entreated him to retain the command. "We agree with you," they said in effect, "as to the madness of the whole enterprise, as must every soldier of common sense; but you will not avert it by resigning. The Government will simply offer the command to general after general until they find one who will accept it; and we shall have to serve under him. You may save us. Under any other commander failure is certain." Upon this, Raglan yielded; and he might very well have informed Ministers of this incident and asked if the reward of his disinterestedness was to be condemnation before he had had a chance of defending himself. But he was far too great and too lofty minded to

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dream of such a thing. Equally he might, while keeping silence on this point, have written a scathing answer, pouring scorn and ridicule upon his anonymous accusers, and upon the Ministers of the Crown who had been mean enough to give ear to them. But Raglan would not descend to this. He refuted every charge conclusively with calm, quiet dignity in simple language and measured terms, without a harsh word and without a hint of indignation; and, having written his letter, he calmly went on with his work. I have a very wide experience of official documents, running through many centuries, but I have never read one so perfect in temper, so conscientious in duty, so rigid in self-restraint as this letter of Raglan's, nor, I may add, one that must have made the recipient more sensible of his own littleness.

Failing, to all outward appearance, in their attack upon Raglan, the Press turned furiously upon his chief staff-officer, General Richard Airey, and endeavoured to make a scapegoat of him. Now Airey, as it chanced, was a man of exceptional ability and public spirit, whose qualities were highly appreciated by Raglan; but, even if he had been of no more than ordinary efficiency, Raglan was not the man to sacrifice him to public clamour. As it was, he defended Airey vigorously and declined to say anything but good of him. Immense pressure was laid

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upon him to throw Airey to the wolves. Had he done so, he would have saved endless, harassing annoyance both to Ministers and to himself; but Raglan was far too great to sacrifice an excellent and unselfish public servant simply because there was popular outcry for a victim of some kind. Not for one second would he renounce his championship of Airey; and at last the Government sent out an independent officer to report upon Raglan's staff at large. This was an ignoble concession to the Press and almost an insult to Raglan, for it implied that he did not know what a good staff-officer was; but the independent officer, to the great disappointment of the Press, expressed in very unequivocal language a most emphatic opinion that Raglan's staff deserved all the good words that their chief had bestowed upon them, and even more. Such were the indignities heaped upon this steadfast, patient, noble old man, because he knew his duty better than the hysterical among the British public.

The winter and its troubles passed away; and on the 18th of June 1855 the Allies delivered an assault upon the principal defences of Sebastopol, which was repulsed with considerable loss. Raglan took the disappointment as always, calmly; but he had been too much worn by previous trials to have any great reserve of strength. A few days after the assault

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General Estcourt, the Adjutant-General, an officer very popular in the army and highly valued by Raglan, was seized with cholera and quickly died. Raglan himself had been already stricken by the same fell disease, and on the 28th of June he too died, with Sebastopol still untaken and his task still undone. He seemed, therefore, to have passed away under the shadow of failure. Few were aware that, if his advice had been followed, Sebastopol would probably have been in his hands nine or ten months earlier. Did he sacrifice too much to the sacred cause of the Alliance? He would be a bold man that would maintain it. Raglan alone could judge rightly upon such a point; and he had to take account not only of the French and English armies on the spot, but of an adventurer on the throne of France, a weak Government in Downing Street, and violent writers and speakers both in Paris and London. It is no exaggeration to say that the maintenance of good feeling between the two armies and the two nations cost him his life; and he freely offered it up, together with his reputation, on the altar of duty.

Sebastopol fell in September 1855, the French taking the larger share in the later operations, as the English had in the earlier. Peace came in 1856, and then at last chance gave Airey the opportunity of demanding an inquiry into his own conduct, which had been so wickedly and

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malignantly assailed. His own address was a defence of Raglan as much as of himself, and was conceived in a spirit worthy of his dead chief, combining extreme restraint with utter absence of recrimination, sarcasm, or reproach, but marshalling plain facts with overwhelming force. In the course of his speech he spoke of Raglan's constancy in the hours of greatest danger. "In those times of trial he ceased to be equal with other men, for his personal ascendancy gave him a singular faculty of carrying his fixed determination into the minds of those who approached him. . . . Men went to him anxious and perturbed. They came away firm." At the conclusion, he mentioned that his friends thought him wrong to be content with mere self-justification and to avoid all utterance of complaint. "I have not complained yet," he went on, "and I will not begin complaining now. I have learned from the example of as noble a soldier as ever commanded a British army in the field that it is one of the duties of an officer in these modern times to bear injustice from many quarters with a long, enduring silence, and to regard all obloquy and all unfounded blame very much in the light of those mere physical hardships which are part of a soldier's lot. It happened to me to be with Lord Raglan in an hour of trial more bitter than that to which I, a mere subordinate officer, now find myself

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exposed, and I saw that my chief was able to bear all and to stand firm by the army in time of need, because he simply cast away all thought of self and remembered—these were his very words—his duty to the Queen."

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XI

THE STORMING OF GHAZNI

On the 10th of December 1839 a force of some fifteen thousand men of the British and Bengal armies set out from Ferozepore, on the river Sutlej, on a march of one thousand miles to Kandahar in Afghanistan. Their mission was to expel from Afghanistan the very able reigning Amir, Dost Mohamed, and to replace him by another prince, Shah Shuja, who had long since been driven from the Afghan throne as unfit to rule. It was a formidable undertaking, for they had first to walk more than four hundred miles through countries of doubtful friendship, parallel to the great River Indus, then to cross the Indus itself—which no British army had yet done—then to traverse nearly two hundred miles of desert to the mouth of the Bolan Pass, then to thread their way through the pass itself—sixty miles—and the rest of the mountain-barrier (another sixty miles) which shuts off the plains of India from Afghanistan, and finally to complete the journey to Kandahar. On the way, somewhere on the Indian side of the Bolan Pass,

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they were to meet another five thousand men from Bombay, under the command of Sir John Keane, which was to land at Karachi, at the mouth of the Indus, and march up the river, through a country which might prove to be hostile, to join them and go with them to Kandahar. If you can imagine an English force marching from Calais through the whole length of France to meet another force which had been landed at the mouth of the Adour, and defiling with it through the Pyrenees to reach Madrid, you may gain some faint idea of our first invasion of Afghanistan.

However, the political authorities, who were supreme in India, declared that the whole affair would be nothing more than a military promenade, and the officers laid themselves out to make it a comfortable campaign. There were at least fifty thousand followers attached to the army and from five-and-twenty to thirty thousand camels. But there was one branch which looked for hard work and plenty of it, and that was the engineers. There would be roads to be repaired and obstacles to be removed everywhere; there would be a bridge to be thrown across the Indus, and there would be very rough tasks of clearing old tracks and making new ones in the narrow defiles of the passes. Lastly, there might, if the Afghans should offer resistance, be some very dangerous and critical work in forcing the

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way to Kandahar, and from Kandahar to the Afghan capital at Kabul. Happily the chief engineer, Major Thomson, was a strong man and a master of his profession.

Their first serious task was to throw a bridge of boats across the Indus at a point where it was more than half a mile wide. Now any military authorities that know their business have a regular pontoon-train, with all appliances, for the construction of such a bridge. The Bengal army had nothing of the kind. Its chiefs knew perfectly well that the Indus must be bridged, but they furnished Thomson with nothing, not even with anchors to hold boats in place, not even with ropes for the thousands of necessary lashings. Thomson was not in the least dismayed. He had to deal with a swift and treacherous stream, subject to sudden rises and falls, through precipitation of rain or melting of snow, an angry stream which tore up trees and carried the wreck of them floating down in dangerous menace to boats and cables; but he was ready to face all trouble. With great difficulty he managed to collect a sufficient number of native boats; and then he felled and sawed up the great bulk of timber which he needed, set men to work to make ropes, and improvised anchors out of stones or anything better that he could think of. He and his officers had to superintend everything, for they had no

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sappers trained to this particular work, and their only boatmen were natives of the country—Sindians—whose language they did not understand, and who could speak no other tongue. Yet the bridge was made, and well made. The army took three days to cross it, and the whole of them—men and beasts—passed over without a single accident of any kind.

Then came the business of crossing the desert. This was necessarily effected by stages from group to group of wells, the longest tract of absolutely waterless country being twenty-six miles; and it so happened that the water at its farther extremity was so noisome that no human creature could touch it, and even thirsty horses refused to put their noses near it. The engineers went in advance to make such preparations as they could; but the general in command was so much dismayed by the experiences and losses of the first parties which he had sent across the waste that he thought seriously of turning back. He sent a message to Thomson to communicate to him his misgivings. Thomson's answer was that the troops must at all hazards advance, otherwise the entire expedition would be wrecked; and he added that he and the engineers would advance in any case. Thereupon the general took heart, and the troops were all pushed across the desert.

This brought them to the mouth of the Bolan

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Pass, into which the engineers plunged at once to make the rough path passable for men, animals, and gun-teams. The track ran close by the bed of the Bolan River which, upon any falling of rain or melting of the snows, became a raging torrent, sweeping all before it and flooding the few camping-grounds on its banks; and, as a matter of fact, the camp of the engineers was thus washed away, before they got clear of the pass. But they worked diligently amid the wilderness of boulders and shingle, making a detour here, blasting a new passage through the rock there, as best they could; and so the army struggled slowly and painfully through the defile to Quetta.

Here the Commander-in-Chief, Sir John Keane, and the Bombay army joined the Bengal force; and new life came into the expedition. There was still another very difficult pass—the Khojak—to be made practicable, and this was the worst of all. The engineers by indefatigable toil had prepared three tracks, but these were of the roughest kind, for they had not time to make them better. By mismanagement on the part of Sir John Keane's staff the columns of march became hopelessly crowded into the Khojak, and were only with the greatest exertions extricated. The heaviest work of all was to bring four eighteen-pounder siege-guns up and down the steep ascents and declivities

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of the defile; and it took some hundreds of men five days to accomplish it. However, it was done at last; and on the 23rd of April the army entered Kandahar, weak, sickly, and exhausted through hunger and excessive fatigue. Since they left Ferozepore they had marched rather more than a thousand miles in one hundred and thirty-seven days. Supplies had failed, and the men had been on half-rations for twenty-eight days, having only two days' supply of half-rations in store when they reached Kandahar. But for the extraordinary efforts of the engineers and the influence, quite apart from professional duties, of Thomson, they would never have reached it at all.

At Kandahar Keane halted for two months, and on the 27th of April he marched to escort Shah Shuja to his capital at Kabul, three hundred miles away. So far the British had met with no molestation except from marauding tribesmen; but now there was a chance of meeting Dost Mohamed; and in any case there stood on the road, about one hundred miles from Kabul, the fortress of Ghazni, which might offer resistance. It was just for such a contingency as defiance from such a place as Ghazni that Keane had brought his four siege-guns over the passes; and the exertion must have cost the lives of a certain number of men through over-fatigue. But for some reason or no reason he decided to

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leave these guns at Kandahar, trusting perhaps to the assurance of the chief political officer (whose intelligence had invariably proved to be wrong) that Ghazni was a place of no strength which could make no serious defence. So confident was he, that when the army came in sight of the fortress he actually rode himself to within half a mile of the walls, when he was warned by the whistle of a few bullets to go no farther.

Closer examination showed that Ghazni was far more formidable than it had been represented to him to be. It was a fairly regular fort of stout masonry, about five hundred yards square, with circular bastions, of the type usual in India; but, instead of being ruinous, as had been reported, the walls had been repaired, there were plenty of guns mounted, and the gates had, to all appearance, been built up. No artillery that Keane had with him, now that he had left his heavy guns behind, could produce any effect upon such walls, so that battering was out of the question. To climb over the walls by means of ladders—to attack by escalade—was likewise impossible, for the parapet was sixty or seventy feet above the plain. To undermine the walls and blow up a breach in them was also impracticable, because there was a wet ditch before the parapet. Moreover, there was a very formidable complication. Keane had with him only three days' food for his army. He could waste no time over

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lengthy operations. He must take Ghazni and take it at once, otherwise his army must starve.

In this dilemma Keane sought out Major Thomson. He had two pieces of information to give him, namely, that the northern gate of Ghazni had not been built up, and that Dost Mohamed, with his army, was reported to be four or five marches away in the direction of Kabul. Thomson gave his opinion that Keane must either march on, fight Dost Mohamed and beat him, in which case Ghazni would almost certainly surrender, or he must blow in the northern gate and capture Ghazni by surprise. Having only three days' supplies, Keane replied that he could not march for four days, with no certainty of encountering Dost Mohamed at the end, and therefore he decided to blow up the northern gate. It was a desperate venture and likely to be very costly of life; but there was no alternative. It was now nearly sunset; so he set his army in motion to march round from the south side of the fortress, where it had halted, to the north side. Meanwhile he imparted his resolution to the political chief of the expedition in the strictest confidence; whereupon the political chief at once passed on the information to Shah Shuja, who passed it on to his retinue, with the result that before nightfall the coming enterprise was the common talk of the Shah Shuja's camp and soon found its way within the

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walls of Ghazni. This indiscretion, for which the political chief deserved to be shot, was the first of an incredible series of accidents which kept the fate of Ghazni continually oscillating in the balance.

All through the early hours of the night the army floundered in the darkness to its new position, and all night long there was a dropping fire from the ramparts of Ghazni, with constant flickering of blue lights and responsive lights from the hills around it. The garrison had evidently got wind of Keane's intentions, but expected an assault at this very time. Keane's troops reached their appointed places at about midnight in great confusion, and settled down to their bivouac, tired out, hungry, and shivering. On the next day the tribesmen came down from the adjacent hills, but were easily driven back; and Keane framed all his plans to assault before dawn on the morrow, the 23rd of July 1840. But first the gate must be blown in; and for that most critical and dangerous work everything depended upon the engineers, acting under the orders of Major Thomson.

Just before dawn Captain Peat, Lieutenants Macleod and Durand, and a small handful of their men moved silently towards the north gate, carrying bags of powder amounting to three hundred pounds in all. When within a hundred and fifty yards of it their approach was dis-

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covered by the enemy. Blue lights were burned and a heavy fire was opened from the upper ramparts. Quietly they went on and reached a bridge of masonry over the ditch, which was commanded by an outwork upon the same level. Had this outwork been occupied by the enemy, every man of the little party would have been shot down; but the garrison seemed to have been lulled into false security by the absence of an attack on the previous night, and not a shot was fired from the outwork. The engineers passed over the bridge unchecked and unhurt, and by great good fortune found near the gate a sally-port in the walls of the fortress, which afforded shelter. Here Peat posted himself with half of the party, ready to take the place of any comrades who might fall, while Durand and the rest very calmly piled up the powder in twelve bags against the gate. Then closely hugging the foot of the wall, they edged their way back to the sally-port.

The garrison was by this time thoroughly alarmed. The whole circumference of the fortress was alive with jets of fire, to which bodies of British skirmishers and Keane's field batteries made vigorous reply. Peat now stole away to a greater distance with his party, losing his bugler, shot dead, on the way; and Durand and a sergeant, by name Robertson, crept back alone to the gate with a long cloth tube full of powder, fixed it

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to the lowest bag of the pile of powder, and coolly uncoiling it edged their way back towards the sally-port. By this time the Afghans, awaking to the fact that there was mischief brewing immediately below them, had leaped upon the parapet and were not only shooting straight down to the foot of the wall but hurling over stones, brickbats, and every kind of missile. Durand and Robertson steadily uncoiled the tube, which, by the merest accident, proved long enough to extend to the sally-port. There, safe from the shower of bullets and stones, they proceeded to light the slow-match which was to fire the train of powder.

This, however, proved to be a troublesome business. Durand was weak and shaking with fever. Flint and steel are not always kindly implements, and it was some minutes before the slow-match would burn steadily and enable Durand and Robertson to slink away out of reach of the explosion. Meanwhile Peat, growing anxious over the delay and making sure that both Durand and Robertson had been killed —as, but for marvellous good fortune they must have been—came forward to look into matters for himself, when the whole charge suddenly exploded. The gate was shattered to fragments, but Peat was thrown to the ground with such violence that for a time he lay stunned. No sooner did he recover himself than, in-

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stinctively mindful of his duty, he reeled into the gateway to see what damage had been done. Whether owing to dust or smoke or because, after such a shock, the poor fellow could see little but darkness anywhere, he failed to perceive daylight through the gateway, and before he could make closer examination was driven out by Afghan swordsmen. He staggered back to seek Thomson and make his report; and meanwhile, Durand, rightly confident that the gate must have been demolished, was looking frantically for a bugler to sound the "advance," which was to be the signal for the assault. Not one was to be found with the skirmishers, who were answering the Afghan fire from the parapet, nor with the forlorn hope under Colonel Dennie, which was awaiting the word to storm the gateway. Durand was fain to hasten back with such speed as he could muster to the main assaulting column under General Sale, which was formed a few hundred yards back. On his way he ran into a graveyard—a terrible place in the dark, as anyone by experience may find out for himself—tripped over a big tomb of masonry, and injured himself so severely that he could hardly drag himself on. Meanwhile Thomson had sent one of his officers, Captain Broadfoot, to ascertain why the storming-parties were not moving, and coming forward stumbled upon Peat who was lying on the ground in a state of

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collapse. Peat stammered out all that he had to tell—that he had failed to see daylight through the gate—and, most unfortunately, he was overheard by General Sale. This officer, known to the public as "Fighting Bob," was a man of great personal courage but little intelligence, who had a singular knack of doing the wrong thing. He now ordered his bugler to sound the "retire"; and the call, repeated along the whole depth of the column, reached the ear of Keane and must have brought his heart into his mouth. For if his stroke at Ghazni had failed he and his army were ruined, and the end of his thousand-mile march must be disaster. Few men can have passed through worse minutes than Sir John Keane at dawn of that fateful day.

In deep inward anxiety he sent an aide-de-camp to ask the meaning of the call to "retire"; but, before his messenger could reach the scene, Broadfoot had found Durand and, learning from him that all was well, ran to Colonel Dennie to bid the storming-party advance. Dennie, a man of fiery courage, needed no second order, and rushed with his men into the gateway. Thomson likewise lost no time in explaining to Sale that he had made a mistake, and the main column quickly followed upon the heels of Dennie. Orientals, while resisting desperately so long as an enemy is without the

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walls, rarely show great fight when an enemy is once within. By the time that Sale burst in through the gateway, Dennie's storming-party were already masters of Ghazni, and Keane and his army, finding great store of provisions in the fortress, were safe.

Overjoyed by the relief of his success Keane wrote a magnificent despatch, setting forth the wondrous nature of his exploit and ascribing all the credit of it to Sale, who had done his best to wreck everything. If any officer of infantry deserved praise, it was Dennie; but the real credit for the fall of Ghazni belongs to Thomson and his little group of engineers. Indeed, but for Thomson the army would never have come before Ghazni at all. No doubt he and his officers claimed no particular merit for the bridging of the Indus, and the making of the roads through the passes. That was all in the day's work, as the saying is, though few consider how arduous the day's work of an engineer may be. But it was entirely thanks to Thomson's firmness that the Bengal force crossed the desert to the mouth of the Bolan Pass; and he seems to have been consulted by Keane at all critical times. His advice saved Keane from one dangerous mistake, and finally delivered him at Ghazni from the consequences of his great blunder in leaving his siege-guns at Kandahar. And Thomson was nobly seconded

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by his officers. The blowing up of the gate of a fortress was nothing extraordinary to require of engineers. They did it all as a matter of course; but their escape, unscathed by the enemy, from the enterprise was by no means a matter of course. By sheer coolness, with death's dart very near their hearts, they accomplished it, their instinctive sense of duty never failing them. Peat, dazed, shaken, and half-blind, emerged from his stupor only to remember instantly that it was his duty to examine the damage at the gate, and was still pursuing his duty when he dropped, powerless, to the ground. Durand, dragging himself painfully to the rear, had but one thought uppermost, to hurry the infantry to the assault; and Broadfoot, quick to realise everything, ran instantly to summon Dennie. They knew that with them lay the fate of Ghazni, and, whether or not they guessed that with the fate of Ghazni was bound up the fate of the army, they did not fail.

Of Thomson and Peat I am sorry to say that I know no more. Broadfoot, who was the soul of the defence of Jalalabad and who saved Sale from utterly disgracing himself there, was killed at Ferozeshah. He fell from his horse with a bullet in his leg, but, despite of the entreaties of Sir Henry Hardinge, the Governor-General, insisted upon remounting, and was presently shot through the heart. Durand rose high in

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the Indian Service and left a distinguished son who rose yet higher and stamped his name on the "Durand line," familiar to those conversant with the north-west frontier of India. They were not small men who piled the powder against the gate of Ghazni.

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XII

A PENAL BATTALION

A FEW years ago a French author published a book under the title *Dante n'a rien vu* (Dante saw nothing), which upon perusal proved to mean that the Hell seen in a vision by Dante was as naught compared with the hell actually existing in the French penal battalion—*le Bataillon d'Afrique*, familiarly spoken of as "le bat. d'Af." It is not generally known that at one time we had not one but many penal battalions, one and all of them at first quartered in the West Indies. Some of them bore strange names, such as the Royal York Rangers, but the most important was the famous regiment known for long as the Sixtieth and now called the King's Royal Rifle Corps. This regiment made a most respectable beginning in the American colonies as the "Royal Americans"; but after the loss of those colonies they sank down into a perpetual garrison for the West Indies. At one moment they had as many as ten battalions. One, the Fifth, made itself a great name in the Peninsular War. Most of

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the others were filled with foreigners, often deserters from foreign armies, and with outcasts from other regiments who were delivered from the punishment due for their misdeeds by their consent to be transferred to the Sixtieth. Thus for thirty to forty years the Sixtieth and certain others, such as the York Rangers, above quoted, were known as "condemned corps," being composed of the worst criminals in the Army.

Nor were the officers much better than the men. The command of such gangs in so deadly a climate offered few attractions to men of worth and honour, and no respectable officer would condescend to belong to them unless it were for a few months as a step to promotion. There was, however, one notable exception to this rule. A certain Colonel Turner, who at one time commanded the York Rangers, by some mysterious gift of personality, contrived to control his battalion of double-dyed scoundrels without the slightest difficulty and with little infliction of punishment, and to convert them into smart, well-conducted, docile, and almost contented soldiers. How he did it, no one knew; but that he did do it is certain; and his name was consequently held in deep respect throughout the Army.

At length the whole system of penal battalions in the West Indies was condemned. It seems to have been based upon the argument that,

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since two years' service in those pestilential islands sufficed to destroy any battalion, it was better that a bad battalion should perish than a good. But, on the other hand, as a bad battalion was not only useless for any good purpose but might also be dangerous, it was decided to allow all the regiments of the Line to take their turn of service in the West Indies. Of course they died fast; but about the year 1840 it was realised that much of the unhealthiness of the troops was due to preventable causes; and in these days, with the help of modern science, yellow fever has been disarmed of all its terrors; so that if white troops were now sent to the Antilles they would be as healthy as in England.

But there was another quarter of the British Empire which was far more deadly than the West Indies, namely, the West Coast of Africa. The average annual number of deaths among British soldiers in Jamaica, for instance, was twelve in a hundred; on the West Coast it varied from seventy-five to eighty. The West African settlements had from the beginning been under the control of a chartered company, but with the abolition of the slave trade the occupation and the resources of that company came to an end. Moreover, a new settlement had been founded in 1794 at Sierra Leone; and, as somebody must look after them, the Crown took charge finally of the whole. But it was certain that

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Parliament would never allow British regiments to be consigned regularly to certain destruction; wherefore another penal battalion was formed for this particular service—the last of its kind—under the name of the Royal African Corps. It is not easy to discover much about it, for its men and officers died too fast to leave much trace behind them. Entries abound in the Commander-in-Chief's letter-books to the effect that the sentence of a court-martial upon some hardened criminal is confirmed, but will be remitted if the culprit consents to serve in the Royal African Corps; but these do not help us much. It is also certain that there were in it companies of coloured as well as of white men, and that they did duty at Cape Colony as well as on the West Coast, which may account for the undoubted fact that they possessed at least a few good officers. In truth, such officers are to be found still in the most uninviting parts of the Empire, drawn thither perhaps by the spirit of adventure, perhaps by desire to atone for youthful follies, perhaps by sheer unselfishness from desire to relieve an impoverished parent from all burden or even to restore him to comfort. For an unhealthy climate has at least this advantage, that a man who can manage to live in it may find himself speedily in high station simply through the death of his superiors, and, if he do well, may rise rapidly. Even

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forty years ago a captain in a West India regiment might, through sheer force of survival, come to be practically absolute ruler over a province as large as the British Isles.

As it chanced, the place where troops were most needed was the unhealthiest of all the British settlements, Cape Coast Castle. Immediately at the back of them was a friendly but not very warlike tribe, the Fantis, and beyond them a formidable military power, the Ashantis, brave, disciplined, and rapacious. The Ashantis had raided the Fantis and even the European settlements repeatedly since 1807; their attitude had grown steadily more menacing; and at the end of 1823 their king intimated to the authorities at Cape Coast Castle that he intended to drive the British into the sea. The Governor of West Africa and the colonel of the Royal African Corps at this time was one Sir Charles Macarthy, a capable soldier and an enlightened ruler. He had served in the West Indies through the two deadly campaigns of 1795 and 1796; he had later belonged to the Light Brigade which had been trained by Sir John Moore at Shorncliffe in 1804; he had then been sent out as major to a fine corps of backwoodsmen in New Brunswick, and in 1812 he had found himself Lieutenant-Colonel of the African Corps and Governor of the West Coast. He was a man of boundless energy who knew not the meaning

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of fear, and was delighted to find himself commander-in-chief, in a small way, of a field-force in face of the enemy.

The said field-force was of a curious description—a few thousand native levies and friendly tribes, all of them in deadly fear of the Ashantis, a handful of black militia, under two hundred strong, officered by merchants of Cape Coast, a few black soldiers of a West India Regiment, and two or three weak companies of the Royal African Corps, perhaps two hundred white men. In all there may have been four hundred men, black and white, whom Macarthy could trust more or less, and half that number whom he could trust absolutely. By all accounts the Ashantis were advancing in twelve bodies upon a front of a hundred miles. Macarthy distributed his own men in four bodies upon a like front; manœuvring to attack the most formidable of the Ashanti forces himself in flank, while another column under Colonel Chisholm, forty miles to his right, should close in upon its rear. He had enormous difficulties with his transport, for in a country where horses, mules, asses, and oxen cannot live, he was obliged to depend entirely upon native carriers, who did not fancy meeting the Ashantis. However, on the 4th of January 1824 he began his advance through the forest, and within a week found himself deserted by all of his carriers. The difficulty was overcome by an energetic

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officer, Major Ricketts, who commanded the rear-guard and who impressed fresh carriers and drove them along at the bayonet's point.

Six days later Macarthy heard that some of his native allies whom he had pushed forward to cover his front were turning back and deserting him; and on the 19th of January he was obliged to send Ricketts with a company of Royal Africans and the black militia to stop them. After a terrible march of twenty miles under tropical rain and through mud waist-deep, Ricketts arrived on the 20th just in time to arrest, by violent measures, the flight of the friendly tribes. They reported the Ashantis to be close at hand and in great force; and Ricketts at once sent a message to warn Macarthy. By dawn of the 21st, Macarthy, always indefatigable, was on the spot, but he absolutely declined to believe that the Ashantis were anywhere near him. The native allies, however, presently gave the alarm, and Macarthy realised that his enemy had completely outwitted and outmanœuvred him. They had deceived him by false reports and feint movements; and there they were now, in his front, concentrated in great force. There could be no mistake, for every subordinate chief of the Ashantis had his own call on the horn for his own men; and a native with Macarthy was able to identify a great many of them. There was nothing to be done but to make the best possible disposition

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for a fight, which Macarthy did with great promptitude and skill, drawing up his troops at the back of a stream which barred the enemy's line of advance.

At two in the afternoon the action began, and for two hours Macarthy held his own, repelling the enemy with great slaughter. But after two hours Macarthy's ammunition began to fail. He rushed to the English commissary, who had been charged with the duty of bringing up the reserve ammunition and who had come up in the middle of the fight. The unhappy man confessed that the carriers had thrown down their loads and vanished into the forest, and that he had arrived on the scene alone. Furious with rage, Macarthy threatened to hang him on the spot; and, indeed, the poor creature only saved his neck by hiding himself. By this time most of the native allies had fled from the field, but a few were still fighting bravely round the steady ranks of the Royal Africans. But they were rapidly drawing near to their last cartridge, and Macarthy tried, while there was yet time, to organise a regular retreat. He was too late. The river, which had protected his front, had fallen in the course of the action, and the Ashantis, who were four or five to one, threw forward both wings across the water and surrounded the few brave men who still held out. Macarthy, already wounded in two places, was

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soon killed, and with him eight more white men, including the unlucky wretch whom he had threatened to hang. Another white man was taken prisoner. Ricketts and another officer, both of them wounded, made their escape with a few of the disciplined or half-disciplined men of the militia and African Corps. But four out of five of these had fallen, and the native allies had long fled away. It was a great and crushing victory for the Ashantis.

Weary and exhausted by the exertions of three arduous days and weak from pain and loss of blood, Ricketts had none the less but one idea which possessed his whole mind and soul—he must at all costs find Colonel Chisholm, tell him of the disaster, and warn him to fall back at once for the protection of Cape Coast Castle before the Ashantis could reach it. With the miraculous strength that comes to men when they put before them some supreme duty which must at all costs be fulfilled, he staggered on through the steaming forest for hour after hour and mile after mile until at length at a point nearly thirty miles from the battlefield he came upon two of his own men, of the African Corps, who were the extreme point of one of Chisholm's advanced parties. He asked if they knew him, but they could not recognise the ghastly face until he told them who he was. They were only two privates of the stamp usual

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in the Corps, hardened criminals, scarred by the lash and with little to hope for in the world; but they took it in turns to carry him on their backs for some miles to a native village, where they could obtain for him some refreshment. But Ricketts could not rest until they had found Chisholm; so then the two criminals wove a rude basket, and, having impressed a native guide, made shift to carry their officer on their heads by turns. Possibly one or other of them may have begun life as a porter in one of the London markets, possibly they may only have copied the fashion of the natives, who carry everything on their heads. But, however that may be, they fared on through the close and stifling forest, one bearing the wounded Ricketts, the other slashing away the branches that impeded their passage, until Chisholm was found. It is exertion enough for a white man to walk for miles without a burden through dense tropical growth, but these men for hours bore a load of over a hundredweight. If ever three men did their duty under sore trial it was this obscure major and his two faithful outcasts. They belonged, it is true, to a penal battalion, but they could not have behaved more nobly if they had been of the First Guards.

So Chisholm fell back upon Cape Coast Castle and did his best, with all of his officers sickening round him, to hold the Ashantis at a

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distance. But they were a formidable foe. The English prisoner whom they had carried away with them was amazed at their discipline, their order, and the regularity with which they performed their duties; and the native allies of the British held them in abject terror. In June the Ashantis advanced in great force upon Cape Coast Castle, and the natives from all the surrounding villages came flying by thousands for safety into the fort. The castle yard was so densely crowded that a man could not cross it without treading upon some human creature, man, woman, or child. Soon there were more mouths than could be fed. Dysentery, small-pox, and famine played havoc among the refugees; the filth and the stench in the over-crowded space was appalling, and heavy rain swept the foul matter into the tanks of drinking water. The troops were little better off than the natives. Even the officers had neither meat nor flour, and but little rice. And the sun beat down ruthlessly; and the Ashantis, too cunning to attack the fort, laid waste the country round, and laughed. Steadily men and officers of the Royal African Corps died of exhaustion, want of food, and foul drinking water. Seldom have British troops passed through a more terrible time. Had not a ship come in from Sierra Leone with provisions, every soul must have perished.

A draft of officers and men for the African

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Corps arrived shortly after, and the Ashantis, calling in their marauding parties, again concentrated before Cape Coast Castle. The king's tent was plainly visible through a telescope, and his chiefs could be seen flaunting themselves in the uniforms of the British officers and men whom they had slain. It was an anxious time, for Macarthy's depot of ammunition had been captured after his disastrous fight, and ball was so scarce in the garrison that every scrap of pewter and lead at Cape Coast had been taken to make bullets and slugs. However, it was thought best to take the offensive, and after an indecisive sally it was observed that the Ashantis were active in demonstrations of attack. Another sally proved that they had retreated. Famine, smallpox, and dysentery had played havoc with them too, to such effect that discipline had broken down and that whole tribes had deserted to their homes. Their demonstration had been made by marching the same men round a hill from the forest into the open, again into the forest and again into the open, after the manner of crowds at a theatre.

The year 1824 passed away without further serious operations; but the men and officers of the African Corps none the less died. Even Chisholm, after fifteen years of the West Coast, succumbed to the climate at last, and left many mourners of all races and colours behind him.

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Fresh drafts arrived in the spring of 1825, and Sir Charles Turner, the officer who had such magical power over bad characters, took over the Government of Sierra Leone. He was dead within twelve months; and it fell to another officer to meet the next invasion of the Ashantis, which was directed against Accra in 1826. The British force this time was quite respectable—a detachment of the Royal African Corps, five hundred disciplined natives officered by four white merchants of Cape Coast Castle, and ten thousand native levies. The disciplined men formed the centre, sharing between them three hundred and eighty muskets, of which the Royal Africans probably carried about one-third; and there was also a party of rocket men and two small guns. With five thousand levies on either flank these marched out to meet the Ashantis, and on the 7th of August 1826 the decisive battle was fought.

The Ashantis, following their usual tactics, tried to envelop both flanks, but were foiled by a counter-attack of the natives. Then by means of taunts they succeeded in tempting some of the natives in the centre to advance, whereupon they broke through the native levies upon one wing and fell full upon the flank of the imprudent men who had come forward. There were some unpleasant minutes until a tiny reserve of the Royal Africans was thrown in to repel the flank-

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ing attack of the Ashantis; the work was completed by a few rockets and a round or two of grape; and presently, the native levies having rallied, the whole line advanced, and the Ashantis gave way. Then followed a wild scene of slaughter. The native levies had many old scores to pay off, and they closed with their enemy in earnest with the knife. Acres of dry grass had been kindled by the rockets, and in the dense clouds of smoke, with the sun blazing down overhead, the savages, mad for blood, cut and slashed and ripped and mangled with unspeakable fury until they could do no more. By one o'clock in the afternoon, after three hours and a half of desperate contest, all was over. Five thousand of the Ashantis had fallen; whereas the victors counted but eighteen hundred killed and wounded. The British lay on their arms through the night, listening to the wail of the Ashanti women as they lamented their dead. When dawn came the Ashantis had vanished. They had been for nearly twenty years a dangerous menace to the British settlements; and now at last they were beaten to the ground and were fain to sue for peace. The negotiations were prolonged for months and years, but in 1831 the Ashantis agreed at length to pay an indemnity and to give security for good behaviour. Nor was there further trouble with them until 1873.

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Long before that the Royal African Corps had ceased to be. It had done its work and taken its wages, which were the usual wages of the criminal—death. They fought in dozens of petty actions; and without them the Ashantis could hardly have been subdued. They were only once tried to extremity, and then they responded not with the baseness of scoundrels but with the nobility of heroes. Even the best of us may take example at least once from the dross of the British Army, and may hope that if ever it is our lot to pass, as they passed, through the furnace, we may be found, as they were, to be pure gold.

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XIII

THE MAROON WAR IN JAMAICA

It is a fact too often forgotten by us that some of the finest examples of discipline and devotion to duty are to be found among bodies of men who, though in all essential respects soldiers, are designated by the name of constabulary or police. Such men are generally employed in small bodies of five or six, or even fewer, for the maintenance of order, the hunting down of criminals, and the suppression of banditti in wild and thinly populated districts; and the service demands of them not only courage and daring but great powers of moral and physical endurance. In the present British Empire the Canadian Mounted Police probably hold the foremost place, and we occasionally hear stories in England of the persistence with which they will follow a gang, or even a single man, for hundreds of miles in contempt of hardships, fatigue, and danger. A century ago they were fully matched by the Australian Mounted Police, which was made up of picked soldiers from the British regiments quartered in the colony, and

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whose extraordinary feats of bush-craft, devotion, and daring would fill a volume with true and romantic tales. But in earlier times it was sometimes necessary to make ordinary regiments of British soldiers exalt themselves at short notice to the height of these choice corps of constabulary; and this story of the Maroon War in Jamaica furnishes a good example.

But who were the Maroons? When the English drove the Spaniards from Jamaica in Cromwell's time—the work was completed in 1658—the black slaves of the Spaniards fled to the mountains and lived by simple brigandage, sallying forth from time to time to massacre and plunder the English planters. They were joined by runaway slaves, for the most part in ones and twos, but sometimes by whole gangs; and between natural increase and occasional reinforcements of runaways, their numbers increased and they became extremely formidable. In fact the planters were obliged to convert every estate-building into a fortress to hold them at bay. At first the Maroons were divided into a number of wandering bands, and these the planters, losing all patience, attacked vigorously with some success. But at the beginning of the eighteenth century the Maroons produced a man of genius—a Napoleon—by name Cudjo, who gradually united all these dispersed gangs

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into one, and devised for them a very skilful and successful system of warfare.

The mountains in Jamaica present a peculiar feature in a chain of glens enclosed by perpendicular rocks and accessible only through a narrow defile, though communicating with each other by more or less practicable passes. In these natural fortresses, known by the local name of cockpits, and then untrodden by the foot of a European, Cudjo fixed his headquarters and defied the white man. To preserve easy communication between the various cockpits, the Maroons contrived a system of horn-signals by which not only every party but every individual man could be hailed and summoned. This no doubt was an inherited instinct or tradition from their old tribal customs in the West Coast of Africa. The outlets from the cockpits being few, the white man could easily find a well-beaten track to the mouth of a defile; but beyond the mouth he could not pass alive. Deep fissures from two to eight hundred yards long, running between perpendicular cliffs and allowing no room for men to pass except in single file, were easily guarded. If an enemy approached, the Maroon scouts sounded a call on their horns; the Maroons within the cockpit ensconced themselves behind rocks and trees, selected each his enemy, shot him down, and vanished to some fresh position. Any intruder

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who escaped the first volley and tried to close with his foe was met by fresh bullets from another quarter. Cudjo never seems to have found difficulty in procuring muskets and ammunition, which no doubt were sold to him by white smugglers.

For nine or ten years the Jamaica authorities fought against Cudjo in vain. He found a cockpit, containing seven acres of fertile land and a spring of water, which was absolutely impregnable, and could not easily be reduced by hunger or thirst. Here the Maroons lived in indolent savagery while their provisions lasted, roaming forth to plunder when they failed. And they were a bloodthirsty crew who never spared a prisoner, white or black. Altogether they established such terror that in 1738 the Jamaica Government found itself compelled to come to terms with them; and a solemn treaty was concluded between Captain Cudjo and his fellow-captains (for the Maroons affected military titles) on the one part, and George the Second, King of Great Britain, France, and Ireland and Lord of Jamaica on the other. The Maroons obtained amnesty, absolute independence, and self-government among themselves, and fifteen hundred acres of land. The King secured that the Maroons should give up all runaway slaves, aid him against all enemies, domestic and foreign, and

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receive two white residents to live among them perpetually. Cudjo was certainly a great man.

For more than fifty years the Maroons gave no trouble. They lived in a state midway between barbarism and civilisation, retaining the primitive religion or superstitions which they had originally brought with them from Africa. They cultivated their provision grounds regularly though with little skill, they bred cattle, horses, and poultry, they hunted wild swine and runaway slaves; while for recreation they drank, gambled, and quarrelled, just as though they had been white men. A quarrel among African negroes takes a peculiar form. They love to cut and slash. In these days a negro's weapon is a razor, not a safety-razor but one of the old-fashioned kind which, if the blade be doubled back on the handle and the whole tied into a split stick, makes a fine cutting weapon in a crowd. The Maroons seem not to have reached this pitch of refinement, but they had knives, and they had cutlasses—the broad blades used for cutting sugar-cane—with which they were very ready upon occasion. But Cudjo and his brother chiefs ruled with a rod of iron, and allowed no unseemly brawls, so upon the whole the Maroons led peaceful lives. Physically they were a magnificent race, tall, muscular, active as cats, and far superior to the negro slaves, upon whom they looked

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down with infinite contempt. They were, in fact, much more closely allied with the white men, with whom they had bound themselves to fight, whether against white invaders or insurgent negroes, than with the black, whose kith and kin they were by race, but whom they helped to keep in subjection by pursuing runaway slaves. This was not a natural state of things and could not endure.

In the course of fifty years the Maroons grew rapidly in numbers and consideration, but gradually the discipline enforced by Cudjo and his first successors died out. The Maroons began to leave their own district and to wander about the plantations, making love to the females and re-establishing their true affinity with the whole body of negro slaves. Their chiefs were so powerless to control them that for a time one of the white residents ruled over them. He had been brought up among them, could beat the best of them at any feat of activity and strength, and would plunge into the thick of any brawl, heedless of whirling cutlasses, knock down all that stood in his way, and clap the rebellious in irons. All went well while his rule lasted, but unfortunately he inherited a property which demanded all his attention; and the Maroons took deep offence at his removal. A blameless individual, who succeeded him, was driven out with ignominy, and the

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Maroons burned their villages and retired into the bush, sending a defiant message that if the white men would not come to them to make terms, then they would come to the white men.

This happened in July 1795, at a most dangerous time. French emissaries from the revolutionary party in Paris were at work in all the English West Indies stirring up the negroes to revolt. In Martinique, Guadeloupe, St Lucia, Grenada, and St Vincent the slaves were in rebellion and for the time triumphant; in Haiti they were steadily gaining the upper hand, and there were dangerous symptoms of unrest in Jamaica itself. The Maroons numbered only six hundred and sixty men, women, and children, but if they placed themselves at the head of a general negro insurrection, they would have followers by the thousand; and, having successfully defied the white men fifty years before and gained their independence, they might, in spite of their past hostility to runaway slaves, be acclaimed as leaders.

The Governor of Jamaica, in this difficulty, first tried conciliation, but with poor success, and he then resolved to blockade the whole tract of the cockpits. This he described to be "forty square miles of the most difficult and mountainous country of the universe"; and as he had very few troops, it was exceedingly doubtful whether he would succeed in penning

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the Maroons within it. So first he tried a little attack. The Maroons cunningly lured the attacking troops into a defile, killed two officers and thirty-five men, and sent the rest flying, not a few of them wounded. Not a single Maroon was seen throughout the whole affair; and the soldiers were considerably demoralised. The Maroons, on the other hand, were so much elated that every fighting man of them got gloriously drunk that evening—so drunk that sixty of them were still prostrate and helpless on the following afternoon. But the Governor, of course, was not aware of this.

Greatly mortified, he now pursued his plan of cooping the Maroons up into their cockpits by a cordon of troops and militia. He might as well have tried to pen a swarm of mosquitoes in a bird-cage. The Maroons quietly passed out wherever they wished, and, as a compliment to the Governor, they burned and plundered an estate six miles on the other side of his head-quarters. Then the rainy season came on, and the difficulties of feeding the troops in the mountains became almost insuperable. The militia, whose officers were mainly planters, soon wearied of their task, and dispersed, their officers setting the example. Meanwhile the Maroons were constantly catching in ambush a man here and a man there; and after five months of hard and harassing work the troops

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had nothing to show for it but seventy-two men (including officers) killed in action, twelve estate-buildings plundered and burned, and not a single Maroon touched. Moreover, the negroes had begun to desert the plantations and to join the Maroons, so that the whole situation was more dangerous than ever.

The Governor now made over the conduct of operations to an officer—Colonel Walpole—of the garrison in Jamaica, who hurried up to the scene of action with all speed. He found the troops ill-provided for and sickly, owing to the rains and the incessant duty, and utterly dispirited by the fruitlessness of all their efforts. Walpole saw at a glance that the Governor's methods were mistaken from beginning to end. It was absurd to think of penning the Maroons within their fastnesses with a cordon of military posts, and it was an error to destroy their provision-grounds because it only drove them the farther afield to plunder and destroy. Walpole at once reduced the posts to a few at the mouths of the cockpits, set negroes to work to clear the bush from the approaches to them and from the heights that commanded the cockpits themselves, and resolved to fight the Maroons in their own ground with their own weapons. To do this he must train a select body of his troops, and, though he had portions of three infantry regiments with them, he chose for his

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purpose a cavalry regiment, the Seventeenth Light Dragoons. Why he preferred them, we are not told, but possibly because they were of stouter heart than the rest. For the colonel who had raised them in 1759 had brought home the news of General Wolfe's death at Quebec, and in memory of his dead chief had taken for the motto of his new regiment a death's head and cross-bones, with the motto "Or glory"; and the men, it is likely, tried to live up to the spirit of their badge.

So these light dragoons, about one hundred and fifty in number, entered upon their education as mountaineer-infantry. The system was that they should work together in pairs, or groups of pairs, one man of each pair taking charge of the arms of the other, while climbing over difficult places, and at other times standing by to fire while the other reloaded. Above all, they were taught to keep themselves concealed, to take advantage of every scrap of cover, and to make themselves good marksmen. For six weeks their training continued, and while it was going forward Walpole taught the Maroons that two could play at the game of ambuscades, for he succeeded in waylaying one of their foraging parties and shooting down twenty of them. This was a good beginning; and a week later Walpole set his mountaineer-dragoons to work.

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He began by sending a small party of them along the crest of the largest cockpit, in order to see whether it might not be entered by some other ingress than the defile, through which no man could pass and live. The Maroons soon discovered them; and both sides fired at each other for some time with little effect, until the officer in charge of the dragoons called up to him his little reserve of a sergeant and nine men. The sergeant, misunderstanding his orders or losing his head, led his men straight into the mouth of the defile, where everyone of them was of course killed. None the less the Maroons became uneasy, for they were accustomed to lie hidden and shoot down the white soldiers at their ease, and it was a new thing for the white soldiers to lie hidden and shoot back.

Walpole's next move was to drag a howitzer with enormous difficulty up a neighbouring height and to drop shells into the cockpit. This soon forced the Maroons to leave it, which they did very unwillingly, for it contained a spring of water, and withdrew into the adjoining cockpit. Once again the howitzer came into play, and the Maroons were driven from this refuge also. They then withdrew to a stupendous height in order to be out of range of the shells; but by placing themselves out of reach of the shells they had placed themselves also out of

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reach of water, which must be carried to them from below. A keen subaltern of the Seventeenth, watching eagerly before dawn, saw a woman come down to fetch water, followed her unseen, and discovered the hidden path which led to the summit of the height. Up this path the dragoons advanced, and forced the Maroons out of their stronghold down a very steep precipice into the next cockpit. Here there was a natural supply of water; but Walpole had now discovered the right method of dealing with the Maroons, and it was only a question of time—and not a very long time—before he should compel them to submission. The mountaineer-dragoons had learned their work in many petty skirmishes, and were confident of their superiority. As each cockpit was cleared by them, it was occupied by the infantry; and Walpole had matured his plans for cutting off the Maroons step by step from all access to water.

Meanwhile the Governor, thinking that no one could succeed where he had failed, had resorted to the desperate expedient of borrowing from Cuba some of the Spanish *chasseurs* and hounds which were there used for hunting down runaway slaves. Accordingly in December 1795, when Walpole was in the full tide of success, there arrived in Jamaica forty-five Spaniards with over one hundred hounds. These animals seem to have been akin to the

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Alsatians of to-day, having prick-ears, very tough coats, and remarkably savage tempers. They worked in couples on the leash, and each couple was accompanied by one or two smaller dogs of the keenest scent whose business it was to discover the trail which the big dogs should follow. The *chasseurs* were as tough, wiry, and bloodthirsty as their hounds. To give a demonstration of their powers, in the Governor's presence, three hounds were slipped, unmuzzled, at a steer. The wretched beast was dead and half-torn to pieces within two minutes; and the terror of these savage creatures, quickly passed from end to end of the island, sank deep into every negro mind, and, above all, into the minds of the Maroons. Walpole, though fully confident of his power to accomplish his object without the help of dogs, and loathing the bare idea of employing them, seized the opportunity to offer the Maroons terms of peace.

So distrustful were they, however—not unreasonably, for banditti can expect no mercy,—that it was difficult to obtain a parley with them, and it would have been madness to have approached them without an escort. On the 18th of December, therefore, Walpole advanced with a small force against a strong position of the Maroons on a steep hill-side, and halted within range of them upon the opposite side of the glen. The Maroons opened fire, whereupon

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the English naturally replied; and it was not until a dozen Maroons had fallen that the officer in command succeeded in checking the fire of his men, when he shouted to the enemy that "the little buckra" (the Maroons' name for Walpole) would grant them peace. Still mistrustful, they refused to believe it; and both sides remained under cover, glaring at each other unseen and waiting for the first man to show himself. Then, at the risk of being riddled with bullets, a subaltern of the Seventeenth suddenly jumped to his feet, threw down his musket, scrambled down to the foot of the valley and invited the Maroons to shake hands. Their leader then took heart, came down and shook the subaltern's hand; and it was agreed that hostilities should cease, on condition that neither party should advance, until Walpole should arrive in person to confirm his offer of peace.

Meanwhile neither party trusted the other, and both remained in position, unseen but alert and ready to open fire at a moment's notice. Both were perishing with thirst, the heat being great, and the English in particular having had a tiring scramble through the scrub. There was water in the valley between the two arrays of combatants; and it was agreed that each should post two sentries over it so that neither side should gain an unfair advantage. This

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done, English and Maroons settled down to glare at each other through the rest of the day and the coming night, the Maroons doubtless hoping that thirst would compel the English to withdraw and enable them to continue the contest. It was a duel of endurance, in which it might have been thought that the wild men, at home in their native fastnesses and inured to hardship, must surely prevail. But the English were disciplined, and the Maroons were not. After some hours the Maroons, unable longer to withstand the agony of thirst, begged that the English sentries might be withdrawn while they came down to drink, engaging in turn to withdraw their own sentries while the English should drink. And then, both sides having refreshed themselves, the sentries were reposted, two wild negroes with their splendid athletic limbs scarce hidden by a few foul rags, and two English lads, bronzed, lean, and haggard after months of hardship and dangerous fighting in the bush, their blue jackets faded and tattered, the white facings soiled, the once white breeches discoloured and torn, but always disciplined soldiers, erect and alert. With all the burden of a tropical climate on their backs, the dragoons had outstayed the native mountaineers in the withstanding of thirst when in sight of water. Anyone of them might have shortened the trial by firing a shot, as if accidentally, which would

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have renewed the action and soon access to the water by driving the Maroons off; and they had plenty of old scores to pay off for comrades entrapped and shot down. But the orders were to cease fire, remain unmoved in the presence of an enemy known to be treacherous, and suffer the torture of parched mouth and swollen tongue in silence. And orders were obeyed.

In due time Walpole arrived, and four days later the Maroons surrendered, binding themselves to beg King George's pardon on their knees, and to settle upon any land that might be allotted to them. Walpole pledged himself that they should not be sent out of the island; but the Maroons, dreading lest the hounds might yet be unleashed at them, were slow to come in; and the Governor made this a pretext for transporting them to Sierra Leone. Walpole, deeply disgusted, refused a present of five hundred guineas from the Jamaica planters and resigned his commission; and George III., when he heard that Spanish hounds had been imported into his dominions to hunt down his subjects, was beside himself with indignation. He characterised the whole proceeding as shameful and gave a positive command that "the whole race of these tremendous animals should forthwith be extirpated from Jamaica."

The King was absolutely right. No men are more subject to ignoble panic than white

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slave-owners in the tropics; and the importation of the hounds, undertaken at the bidding of a lot of terrified planters, did, though they never were employed, more harm than good. Walpole had the situation perfectly in hand. He would have had the Maroons subdued at his feet; and he rightly ascribed their submission to the right cause—"the undaunted bravery and fine spirit of the Seventeenth Light Dragoons." And, indeed, though the whole incident seems in scale so insignificant, these light dragoons performed no ordinary feat. The Maroons had been a terror, sometimes active, sometimes inactive, to Jamaica for a century and a half. They had baffled all efforts to reduce them to submission; they had extorted by force of arms a state of independence, and were reputed invincible. When they broke out in 1795 they resorted to their old tactics, and, the troops being mishandled, with complete success. Walpole went up to one group of a force of weakly, cowed, and despondent men, told them what he expected of them. At once they shook off any discouragement; and within six weeks they were fighting the dreaded Maroons on their own ground with a hardihood, skill, and daring which soon gave them the mastery. The work was new to them. They had to fight in small scattered bodies, depending on their own intelligence and their own initiative,

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with little glory to gain and much hardship and danger to incur; but they did their duty joyfully, and, though the achievement of it necessarily gave them much independence, they showed that they could pass triumphantly through a supreme ordeal of discipline. The Seventeenth Lancers have justified their badge and motto many times since then, but never more worthily. It is not always in the most conspicuous field of action that the finest deeds are done.

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